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Kutchi Leva Patel

Our Journey to the Prosperity

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Kutchi Leva Patel

Our Journey to the Prosperity

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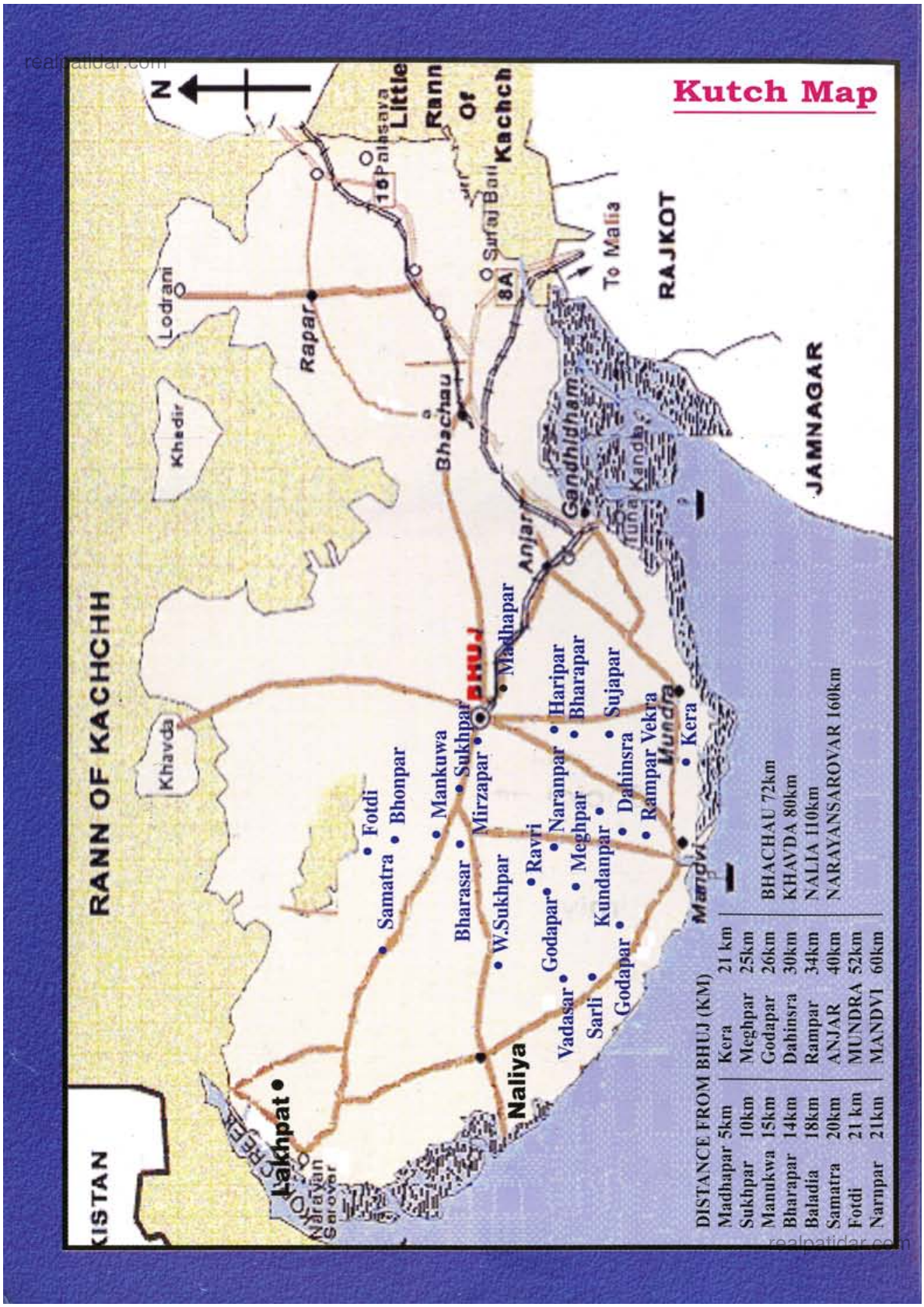

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Kutchi Leva Patel

Our Journey to the Prosperity

Author
Shree S. P. Gorasia

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Despite our best endevour to maintain accuracy in both informatiom and translation, CSCS or any of its volunteers cannot be held responsible for any loss as a result of any information in this booklet.

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Author's Introduction

To give something new to the Gaam and community has always been an intention of the author Mr S. P. Gorasia who has only been educated to year four. He was awarded a Certificate by the 'Government of Bombay Drawing Board Examination' for passing the elementary grade drawing exam in 1944. The author has accumulated information including his personal experiences and has attempted to include these in this booklet 'K. L. P. Apnu Sthlantar'. Despite his old age he has continued to work very hard in his quest to enlighten the younger generation of our history.

Mr Gorasia who believes in simplicity, has respect and affection for religions and humanity. He has written numerous articles useful to the community which have been published by the community and other news papers. His efforts and active involvement in the community work throughout his life is an encouragement to us all.

Under his guidance, Cutch Social and Cultural Society is proud to publish this booklet. The author hopes that this book will provide/remain a valuable source of our history for the future generation.

He has an interest in writing but also continued to encourage the younger generation to write has achieved some success in inspiring others to write.

In my view, it is not unreasonable for the community to expect Shivjibhai to continue to write articles that are of invaluable to the community.

- Dr. Shamjibhai Hirani

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Acknowledgement

For a long time I have been considering to write a book on our community's history and today I feel overwhelmed as I put my pen to paper to write these introductory chapters.

Many people have aided me in compiling various articles in this book and amongst them I am particularity thankful to Shree Ramji R. Patel who is current chairman of the Education and Medical Trust of Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj (Bhuj).

In addition, I am grateful to the Cutch Social and Cultural Society for lifting the biggest burden of publishing this book from my shoulders. The President, Secretary and other office holders deserve the greatest admiration for their efforts. I would also like to show my appreciation to the London branch of the Raghunath Mandir (Madhapar) for their contribution.

I am further obliged to Dr.Samji R. Hirani who has encouraged me to publish my collection of the historical information in this book. Dr Hirani has always expressed his feelings for the necessity of publishing such a book for the benefits of the future generation. I am thankful for his assistance in publication of this book.

We have made every effort to include the useful information for all twenty four (24) Kanbi Villages. However, we regret that despite our best efforts, we could not obtain information on some of the villages, mostly due to the lack of response from the leaders of these villages.

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who has helped me in compiling and in publication of this book.

- Shree S. P. Gorasia

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Forward

In Kutch, our Gnati (Community) is known as "Leva Patel Chovishi". It is said that we came to Kutch from the North West of the Indian continents to escape local King's atrocities via Punjab and then into Gujarat in search for a better life.

The rulers of the Kutch initially accepted us as simply the labourer despite the fact that we were knowledgeable farmers.

After witnessing our honesty, integrity, simplicity and hard working they eventually lifted all the restrictions and allowed us to farm independently. However, the irregular rain, rulers' extra levies on the farmers to satisfy their extravagant life style and lack of modern agricultural equipment made making ends meet even more difficult. Therefore our Gnati was forced to cross the sea to look for a decent living in African continent.

What happened after that is known by the present generation. With hard work, self-help, dedication and honesty we once again achieved a decent living. From the farm labourers our people progressed to the construction industry and some became very successful businessmen. Once arriving in Africa we began to sponsor our family members to join us, educating our children and we learnt the importance of giving donation and started donating from the hard - earned money. From 1960 we started educating our children to the higher academic levels. Subsequently the change in the economic and political status of the East African countries forced some of us to venture into the European countries. It would not be wrong to say that economic hardship became the key for our Gnati's development in all fields.

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Despite gaining economic growth by working and living in Africa, our lack of education gave way to narrow-mindedness, blind faith and social and religious diversity. Conversely the social and economic independent atmosphere of Europe encouraged the parents to educate their children more freely.

Although our people have now taken permanent residency in England and other countries, their attraction and lure for Kutch has remained the same for generations. Indeed, their feeling towards Kutch grew further and despite living in Africa and the rest of the world they contributed towards social, educational, religious, health and economical growth of Kutch.

Whatever progress our Gnati has made over the last 50 years is admirable and the main reason for this progress was education. In 1987 we sowed seeds of girl's education and within 19 years our Gnati has achieved a leading recognition. Once a victim of darkness arising from lack of education, the progress we have made in the educational field has brought us into comparison with other educated and liberal Gnatis. Once branded as ignorant and backward, our Gnati has achieved tremendous success in social, cultural, educational and political fields and are proud of our achievements. Even in the days of the darkness our Gnati members have never begged, instead has always been generous to others.

Despite living in Africa and Europe we have not forgotten the family values, love for god and Indian values which our grandfathers inherited from our ancestors. India has still kept a strong hold on our hearts.

It is necessary to recognise the strong influence the Swaminarayan

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Faith brought to our Gnati. This particular faith was born in the 19th century and reintroduced the importance of honesty, good behaviour, hard work and simplicity. Wherever our people have settled, they have adhered to these virtues and have continued to progress.

Cutch Social and Cultural Society (UK) should be thanked for publishing Mr. S. P. Gorasia's attempt to inform the new generation of the struggle faced by our forefathers and the hardship they endured. Shivjibhai has attempted to describe all the occasions/events in a simple and realistic manner. I hope that the new generation will appreciate all the hard work put into the publication of this book.

Originally written on 17 February 2004
Shree Ramji R. Patel.
President: Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj Education and Medical Trust.

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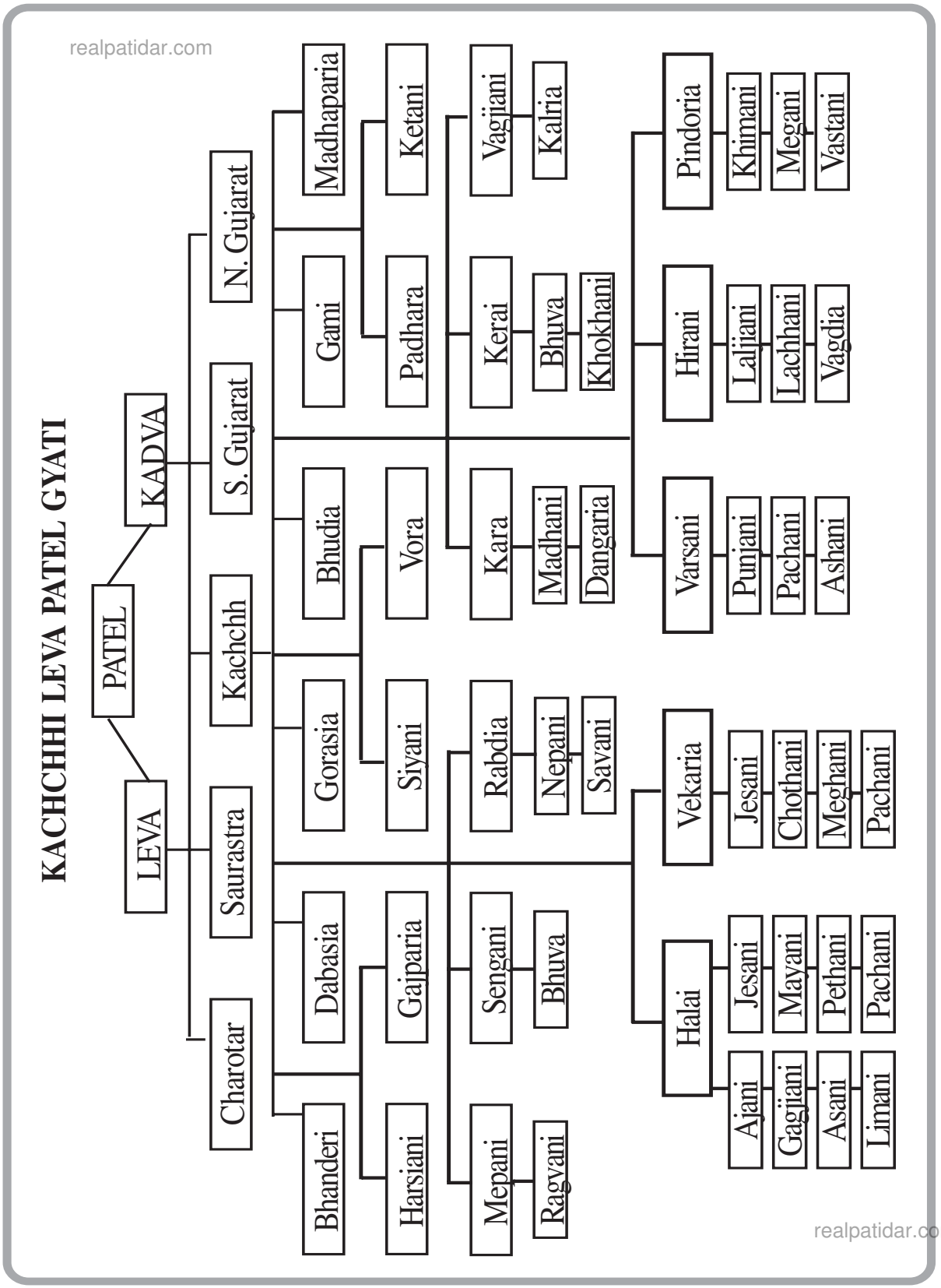

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Cutch Social and Cultural Society

Shree Kutch Madhapar Patel Natyakala Mandal was established in 1939 in Nairobi. When active members of this society moved to London, they formed Cutch Social and Cultural Society in 1968 to continue their cultural activies and to promote our traditional values in the new generation to come. For this purpose the group used to organise cultural programmes such as music, natak (drama), and dance and age old Navratri festival.

From 1965 onwards our people began to settle in UK. To keep our traditional values intact, a column of tree planted in Kenya in 1939 was farmed in UK. That column has now grown to a big tree, which has continued to promote the Indian values in our young generation. The Society's members and their children have continued to organise musical programmes, natak and Navratri events on a regular basis. Bearing in mind the limited capacity of the school hall designated for the event, the Society's membership is restricted to 500 families. It celebrates Diwali and Ashadhi Beej (Kutchi New Year) on an annual basis during which stage items such as natak and dances are presented. The society has so far presented 20 nataks at different places.

The music required for the Navaratri and other events is presented by the group comprising of the Societys members. This not only saves the cost of such events, but gives our members an opportunity to develop their musical talents.

Funds saved from Society's income are donated to the various natural disaster relief appeals and other worthwhile causes throughout the world without any racial or religious discrimination. The Society's current membership income is

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approximately £10,000 per annum. Most of this income merely covers the cost of the annual events held, but still the Society has managed to donate more than £180,000 to various charities and disaster appeals. All this has been possible because of the generosity of the Society's members and other donors.

The Society held a Millennium Mega Mela at the Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Community and Sports Center (SKLPC&SC (UK)) Ground, during which it raised £15,000 (after expenses) in the year 2000. These proceeds were divided between three UK charities.

No Kutchi will forget the awful day of 26 January 2001 when an earthquake hit our Kutch, regardless where he/she may live. Whilst the rest of the world was still waking up to this dreadful news, nine dedicated members of the Society were already on their way to the affected areas with emergency relief equipment.

The Society is proud to have a member, who not only donated £10,000 for the Emergency Relief, but also promised to bear the Society's annual running costs for the following three years. This helped the committee to raise further £58,000 from other generous members and the Society's well wishers.

Nine members, who bore their own travelling and accommodation costs, carried out the necessary distribution of the emergency supplies. At the same time they surveyed the disaster area and chose a village called Harodi, which was virtually destroyed in the earthquake, for rebuilding. After three months two members revisited the village with a view to help the villagers to help rebuild the houses destroyed in the earthquake. The Society helped rebuild the whole village including, playground

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for children, an arch at the entrance to the village and the temples.

The Society has always been keen in promoting our traditional values in the families living in the UK. For the very purpose the Society has decided to publish this book in conjunction with Shree Shivjibhai Gorasia. As mentioned previously, the purpose of this publication is to provide information to the present and future generations about our ancestors and migration from India to the rest of world and including the historical background of the said 24 Kutchi villages in India.

For publication of this book, a sub-committee has been appointed by the Society and its members are:

Ravjibhai Valji Bhudia
Savitaben Ravji Bhudia
Laxmanbhai Devji Hirani
Arvindbhai (Ashok) Naran Hirani
Ramnikbhai Hirji Bhudia
Laljibhai Shamji Gorasia
Shivjibhai Lalji Siyani
Kalyanbhai Govind Pindoria
Laxmanbhai Zina Gorasia

In addition to above, the Society thanks the following for their assistance in translating to English.

Shantilalbhai Mavji Siani
Vinodbhai Devraj Khokhani
Dinaben Devshi

The aim of the Society has always been to promote cultural

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events and raise funds to help the less fortunate people of the world and make it a better place for our present and future generation to live. Let us hope that we continue to grow and be successful in achieving our aim in future.

By President
Shivjibhai L. Siyani

In poverty and other misfortunes of life, true friends are a sure refuge. The young they keep out of mischief; to the old they are a comfort and aid in their weakness, and those in the prime of life they incite to noble deeds.

- Aristotle

Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb.

- Sir Winston Churchill

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Leva Patel Migration

In United Kingdom, there are a number of day care and community centres providing care and support to our elders. Most are governed by the local councils whereas some are managed by private providers.

A very similar centre, "Kutchi Leva Patel Elders Group Centre" is run by our Samaj, (Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Community UK) SKLPC (UK), based at West Hendon, London. This centre tries to help and give guidance in many day to day issues faced by the daily visitors to the centre. People can get assistance in filling in medical and social security forms, get helps with reading and replying personal letters.

Everyday, snacks and soft drinks are available to all members. On Tuesday and Wednesday, light buffet dinner is prepared and donated by our Kanbi caterers, Chandni Sweet Mart and Rajan Restaurant.

This Centre is open to every one, there are no restrictions to its membership, and provided rules and regulations are adhered to. Any elderly man or woman can become member by registering at the Centre. The Centre also tries to cater for the interests and hobbies of most members. There is a reading centre with Gujarati and English books/magazines/newspapers. There is a small games division for some indoor card and board games and TV and Video corner for those who prefer to watch daily soaps and Bollywood films.

Besides this, the Centre is a great source of historical information.

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All those who gather,share past experiences of life in East Africa and India. There may be a deep pool of knowledge which if harboured correctly, can reveal lots of historical facts fictions and myths about our community. In December 2000, in a seminar about our history, a suggestion was give by Maheshbhai Shivdasbhai to undertake some research into our ancient history. Even though we are living in the age of World Wide Web (WWW), the internet, he suggested that the most reliable source for information could only be derived from one to one talk with our elders and also from old books.

Talking about the migration, according to the last three to four hundred years of historical information, we have not remained in one place for more than two to three generations. In the relatively recent migration, we may have moved from Saurastra to Kutch. Leva Patels living in Vagad, Saurastra may have migrated from Banaaras-Kauntha. These Leva Patels are living in Anjar, Bhachau and Raapar Districts at present.

In earlier times, there used to be a small carriage way (gada vaat) just north of Surajbari Bridge, known as "Saat Sherda Marg". This marg used to connect to North Gujarat, Banaaras-Kauntha, Mahesana and Sorath. In this time period, Kadva Patidars' also migrated from these regions and settled in about 142 villages around Anjar, Nakhtrana-Bhuj and also Lakhpat. "Mistry" community (Brick and Stone layers) from Sorath came and settled around Bhuj- Anjar District about 50 to 100 years before us. They are now known as "Sorathias". Being early migrants, they got more fertile and better land for farming.

According to the information extracted from our elders, we seem to have migrated from Saurastra (Jamnagar) around Vikram

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Savant (V.S.) 1740. This is further supported by Radeshalji (previously known as Desra Parmeswar). The first settlement around Bhuj seem to have happened at this time period. First adventurer migrants managed to find and settle on flat, more habitable land, whereas, late comers had to search for land and found less suitable land. Perhaps this is the reason why we have 24 Gaams in Bhuj Taaluka. The main travelling route around this time was from Bhachau, through Anjar, Varali, Jabudi and Bhakaar then passing through Reha, Hajapar and then Bhuj. There was a narrow carriageway sprouting near Khadoyi-Bhuvad going towards Bhadreswar, Mundra and Mandvi. Narrow dusty road from Sheha-Hajapar and Jadurai connected to the villages of Bharapar and Kera. Logically this is the reason we first settled in Bhuvad, but interestingly so, Meghpar and Manukuva were already established villages at the time.

Let us deviate a little to understand the meaning of a local term 'Had' or 'Hed'. In earlier times, when ever there was family bickering or fight, one used say "What are you going to do to me, put me in Hed?" The Hed meant that the punishment was given to reflect ones social class. Most of the judgements were taken by the heads of villages called Patels. From time to time, the innocents got punished for the crime committed by wealthy and influential people under this corrupted village justice system.

Meghpar was one such village and it was in a derelict state. People used to gather up on a tall, square platform. Most of the time village politics and gossips were discussed here including complaints and punishments were dealt here too. In the wall nearby, in a small cupboard like space, a guilty person was made to stand with his hands tied behind, tall wooden sticks used to be placed around him to make it like a very confined

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cage. This tiny place was known as "Hed".

Coming back to the main points, because of this socio economical injustice, very few families stayed in one place for more than three to four generations. Another reason this migration was only limited to Bhuj district was because at that time we were not landlords but just gypsies like migrating farmers. Farming or cultivation under the ownership was known as RAAVARI and the other type as PASAAYATI. Up to 33 Percentage of what was grown on the fields had to be given to the Landlord as their commission. Farmers used to hire destitute men known as "Haathis" to do heavy and hard work and also worked unsociable hours. They used to be hired for one year during Ashadhi Beej. In Return these Haathis used to get their daily food ration, two pairs of clothing and a small amount of cash money. This system of landlord tyranny lasted until 1950. After the independence, the ownership of the farming land was given to the person cultivating that land for a very nominal fee paid to the land registry office.

This new law created social upheaval in the country. Socially unacceptable gangs and divisions were formed. Bandit Bhupat who used to torture farmers was part of one such gangs. Working on the principle, 'enemy of my enemy is my friend' and becoming friendly with other thugs, led to the formation of small groups fighting for power. Many family livelihood was destroyed by these groups under the name of cast and religion. Hindu religion was shattered into small sects, quarelling with each other. These evil minded thugs were spreading hatred and carnage in the name of god. Individuals, whether from the same Gnati or Country who exploits religion for personal gain, deserves nothing but contempt.

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Living and migrating in unbearable and cruel social environment, has made our people more determined, strong minded and adventurous. Constant will and determination to survive, led our elders, to gather enough courage and strength and eventually emigrated during 1890s, to a totally unknown land, Africa. In the beginning in Africa, our elders have been known to work for merchants in Jangbar from Mandvi, Jeram Shivji and in Mombasa, Alladina Vishram originally from Mundra. Elders used to work in warehouses transporting materials and water using carts and donkeys as means of transport. During this period, in the building work, they used to use string made from plants and bamboo sticks to make scaffoldings. They learnt this technique of building scaffolding and slowly began to gain experience in the building trade. Samjibhai of Dahinsara (Swahili Wala), in 1887 worked for Alladina Visharam as a water supplier.

In 1896, when the project to build a rail network from Mombasa to Kampala-Uganda started, some of our elders began work laying rail tracks. Some moved from Jangbar (Zanzibar) to Mombasa and began to be known as "Jangbari". In 1903, Samjibhai Swahiliwala, who had lived in Jangbar for 12 years sailed for two months in a small ship from Mandvi to Mombasa. He brought with him farming equipment (plough etc.) and began vegetable farming. After that, we started growing fruits and vegetable in Magdisha-Somaland.

In the year 1900 AD (1956 V.S.) a severe famine (known as "Chhapanno") struck Kutch province. To survive this femine, our people started to make a shorter journey to Karachi as well as travelling to Africa via ships.

In a tragic incident in 1942-43, during World War II, one of

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these passesger ships was destroyed by Japanese navy. There were large numbers of our elders on board, some managed to survive with the aid of floating planks and debris and eventually reached shore, while others were lost at sea, never to be found and presumed dead.

Our major noticeable settlements were around Mombasa, Nairobi and also Nakuru. One of the Vekaria family moved to Kampala when the main railway station was being built in 1935 AD. However, this Vekaria family moved away when there was an outbreak of Malaria, whereby many people fell victims to this disease. (The old railway station used to be at the corner of Entebe Road just opposite Swaminarayan and Shiv Mandirs).

During the First World War, (1914 to 1918 AD) the government introduced compulsory military service and elders were sent to Tanga, a small town in Tanganika, Dar-Es-Salam. As a result they settled there and formed a small Kutchi community. Due to a huge demand for recruitment in the army during the Second World War (1939-45) many adult men were sent to Somalia and Magdisha. After 1945 AD, the fathers were allowed to call their young children for education. A large number of youths managed to emigrate from India to Africa and during the process some had to falsify their ages to qualify for right to imigration. During Mau-Mau uprising (1952-56), people were forced to join the local police force.

The families arriving in the Africa after the Second World War managed to settle in many other parts of Kenya. They also took a gamble and settled in Somalia, Uganda, Tanganika, Congo and Rawanda. At a later date, after the independence of many African countries, political and social situation changed

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dramatically. These migrated communities began to move again, this time towards Europe.

Historically, most communities are always on the move in search of better life and our community is no different. At present time, we are most happily settled in the UK. There is a unique hidden quality of togetherness in our community that made these migrations less painful and frustrating. Our willingness to help financially and socially to the new families who came and join us overseas is a great asset to our Samaj.

Now that we have stepped on the lands of Europe, America and UK, let's experience the way of life in the UK during the 1960s. There was huge gap between income and expense. There was a constant struggle to make ends meet. Most used to rent a small room and share a house with up to ten other residents. Bearing in mind expensive travelling costs, cold climate and harsh living condition people were less inclined to move to the UK. However those who did come chose to settle in small towns in North England such as Blackburn, Bolton, Manchester and Oldham, where job prospects were better than in larger cities. Although wages were slightly lower, living and travelling expenses were also significantly lower, which made it attractive for people to live and settle in these parts. Work timetables were scheduled in shifts, morning, afternoon or night shifts so your accommodation was also organised in a similar manner, based on your work time sheet. The new comers were especially welcomed and helped by our resident community members and managed to quickly adjust to this new life style and became part of local community in no time. One should always support living in close knit community. In time of joy and happiness or sadness and struggle with the moral and financial support from fellow

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community members we can overcome most of the struggles of lifes.

Educational Trek

One of the first to arrive in this country to obtain education was Jadva Naranbhai Vekaria of Baladia in 1949. Harishbhai Govind Halai, Khimji Lalji Bharaparia and Kanji Gangji Halai of Madhapar came in 1952-53. There after gradually people started to arrive to settle. In our attempt to list those early arrivals, we apologise for any we may have missed. Information presented here is accurate to author's knowledge.

Karsan Harji Halai,	Naranpar	1959
Harji Jadva Bhudia	Madhapar	1961
Shamji Shivji Hirani	Madhapar	1962
Jadva Lalji Pindoria	Madhapar	1960
Shivji Lalji Pindoria	Madhapar	1960
Laxman Ramji	Baladia	1960
Shivji Amba	Mandvi	1960
Lalji Velji	Mandvi	1960
Devshi Karsan Halai	Godpar	1960
Naran Karsan Vekaria	Baladia	1963
Kunverji Murji Varsani	Samatra	1963

Above community members were some of the first to settle in England. These people settled in various cities, on their own, such as Manchester, Oldham, London, Blackburn, Bolton and others.

Between 1964 and 1968, the number of people/families settling in Britain grew quite dramatically. In 1968, due to the

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introduction of a quota system by the British Government, people entering Britain from Kenya, India, Pakistan etc… rose sharply. People came here in large numbers. Some people came with their families, whilst others came on their own. As these individuals began to settle they called their families to join them.

Second influx on a major scale was in 1972 when Asians had to leave Uganda. To accommodate the large number of people arriving, the British Government made arrangements for additional airports and camps to cope with the shear numbers. Some people had to remain in camp for months while arrangements were made for them to move to and settled in a permanent location. During this time of public distress (this is to say that, the local population was some what concerned as to how much of a burden these refugees were going to be on their resources, in terms of jobs, housing, education, medical services, etc….), anti immigration supporters, such as Enoch Powell (a Politician in 1970s) were very much against the government allowing these British Citizens into the country, and providing them with assistance to settle. Heath Government at the time stood its ground and fulfilled its commitments to its Citizens. They maintained that all British Citizens had the same rights and whenever British Citizens were made refugees, it was their duty to allow them and settle in Britain. This proved to be beneficial for so many of us, who were suddenly robbed of all our possessions and made homeless/countryless.

During this crisis, Indian Government had also said that they would provide necessary assistance to those British Citizens who were of Indian origin. But British Government's acceptance of their responsibility towards their Citizens meant that the problem of refugees was contained and the Indian government

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did not have to provide assistance on a large scale.

During the years 1961-1972, our community members also travelled and settled in USA, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Canada and other countries around the world. In 1975 Karsan Mavji Varsani went to Australia and with a lot of hard work and a great deal of luck settled there and started to emphasise the importance of education.

As time went on we began to settle in various parts of the world. In order to maintain our identities and links with our origins, we started to form community organisations. From information available, Madhapar's organisation, Madhapar Karyalay (UK) has been one such active organisation. In 1967 Madhapar Karyalay (UK) was actively involved in raising funds to build MSV (Madhapar Saraswati Vidhyalay) High School in Madhapar to promote education in our community.

Joint Council For the Welfare of Immigrants provided vital service to so many of our community members with immigration related issues.

Sangam, in association with Asian Women Advisory Centre, helped so many women, who were sponsored to come to U.K. to marry and then had their passports taken away and threatened that they would be sent back if they did not do as they were told. In addition to this, these organisations also established an advice centre, where women can obtain useful advice related to not only immigration matters, but other issues such as marriage counselling, divorce etc…

The Cutch Social and Cultural Society was formed in 1968.

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The main aim of this society was to promote our culture, and to raise funds for less fortunate people around the world, by organising cultural programs. Up until the year 2000 this organisation had donated £57,000 (fifty seven thousand pounds).

To maintain unity within our community, cultural values, and emphasise importance of our identity in this new land, where we have decided to settle, an organisation called Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community (UK), was formed in 1972.

Cutch Social and Cultural Society organised an out door event at Shree Kutch Leva Patel community (UK) and sports centre at Northolt in 2000. This event took place over two days, and was named "Ashadhi Beej Charity Mega Mela". It was organised to raise funds for three charities. They were **NAZ, UK Thalassaemia and Leukemia.**

The society raised nearly £15,000 after deducting expenses (fifteen thousand pounds) and £5000 (five thousand pounds) were donated to each of the above charities.

In this way organisations in the early days took on board activities that were for the good of our community. Each organisation played a very important role in uniting our community, in its own way.
At present (in year 2004) we are bringing up our third generation in this country. Amongst our youth, the use of narcotics, alcohol and other illicit substances is prevalent. It is at present believed to be at a level that is considered to be such that it is not alarming to the extent that it is in other communities, such as English and the Afro-Caribbean. On the other hand, our youngsters have performed quite well at educational level, in many fields. These

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fields include, engineering, hair dressing, police, computer science, IT, management, as well as other parts of service industry. This is something for our community to be really proud of.

It is only with a flexible mind and determined approach we will adapt to changing times. Only by being set in our resolve we will keep up with the times. Whether we gain or loose, will be governed by fate.

Rather than to have too high opinion of oneself or become self-righteous, individuals should lead their lives in tune with reality and time.

For example, during Lord Swaminarayans era, we as a community were very poor, not only in terms of monetary possessions, but in education, in our standard of living, items of luxury etc....What would our contribution have been in promoting this religion, or building temples? It is with the good wishes and generosity of others, we are where we are today. We should now adopt the same good wishes and generosity towards others, and do what ever we can to help others who are less fortunate than us.

Just as the removal of an infected limb is good for the rest of the body, truth is very bitter most of the time, but for the person hearing it, it is equally beneficial. Religion is not just the performance of so called religious activities, and doing the mala while listening to katha. Religion is also an awareness of ones responsibility to his/her family and fellow community members. The fulfilment of individual's obligations to his family is the ladder of advancement. It is with this commitment our future generation

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is moving forward.

According to information obtained from our Vahivancha (record keepers), Kunbi surname exists in Afganistan and Baluchistan. It appears that Kadwa and Leva Patels in Baluchistan are associated with Kunbi. It is most likely that the word Kanbi is derived from Kunbi.

This Kunbi community, from Baluchistan travelled to Pakistan, Lahore, Panjab, Utter Pradesh and Bihar. Second flow could have been from Hariana, Kurukshetra, Rajesthan and then Gujarat. Vahivancha used to collect and store information related to our history, and family. This was their profession. They used to make a nominal charge for updating and maintaining records; this involved travelling to various Gaams, and meeting people to collect information about new additions and deaths in their families. Vahivancha used to be given a sum on joyous occasion, such as birth or weddings, etc., in addition to their annual charge. It was via this source we were able to get historical information about our ancestors. Around 1960 this service collapsed. New generation of Vahivanchas opting to take up normal employment rather than to continue in their forefathers profession of relatively low paid community service work. A major factor in the demise of their profession was due to a reduction in demand for their services which in turn was because of the changes in our community's life style. One thing for certain, we have to be thankful to them for what ever information we have today about our ancestors.

These Vahivancha use to visit Madhapar as a guest of a gentleman formally known as Naran Shamji Ghadia, and presently known as Naran Shamji Madhaparia. In 1990 they informed

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Naranbhai, that our history would only be available for a short period of time from now. The reason for this was given as, up until now, Vahivancha worked as a single family so all the information was stored in one place. With the separation of their family, this information records will be divided amongst brothers, as a result information will be stored in different places and will be under the control of different individuals. Therefore not all information will be available from a single source.

In those days, because photo copying facilities were not available, in order to maintain written records, they had to be hand copied periodically to prevent them from perishing with the paper they were written on. With information stored in more than one place, if anyone required a full history, they would need to visit a number of places to gather information. With this would be involved separate charges to be paid at each place. With the lack of interest in this information, for various reasons, this information in a number of places is just wasting away. Total cost of this information at the time was quoted at some four to five thousand Rupees. It would probably be a lot more now. Despite these difficulties and cost, interested people are purchasing information about their family ancestry. We note the address of these Vahivanchas for interest:- Amratlal Shivalal, Aliabada, Navapara, Jamnagar, 361 110.

Proceeding further based on information obtained from Vahivanchas, the Muslim religion was rife between 7 th and 9 th Century. It therefore follows that our ancestors would have moved from Punjab to Rajsthan and then to North Gujaratp It Is assumed that we came to be known as Kunbi around this era.

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Kunbi communities were very devoted worshipers of goddess and even today we see that Kadwa Patidar still worship Umiya Maa, and Leva Patidar Maa Kodiyar, Surapuri, Satisar Anapurna and Surdhan. It is estimated that we would have reached Gujarat around thirteenth century.

One possible reason how we came to be known as Patidar or Patels could be that we were farmer by profession and because of our association with farming we were known as kanbis. Once in Rajesthan and North Gujarat we begane to lease land ("Pate") for cultivation. It is assumed that as a leasee of the land we became "Patedar" and over the time Patedar became Patidar and then Patel. The Kadva and Leva Patels even today are found together wherever they have settled. Later on the surname were introduced. These were based either on the name of the forefathers or name of their villages/provinces. For example, Halai from Halar district, Bhudia from Bhuvad, Hirani from Hirava, Laljiani from Lalji, Virjiani from Viranath, Meghani from Meghava, Gorasia from Gorsi, Bharaparia from Bharapar, Kerai from kera, Vekaria from Vekra, etc…..

With a great deal of hard work and commitment to improving our standard of life, our community progressed at economic and educational levels, we also began to appreciate the importance of unity. Mr V. K. Patel of Madhapar played a major role as a leader to promote these values in our community. For this he is truly worthy of this recognition.

Presently we are remembering the highlights from our successful past but time will come when we will hear similar interesting stories about our education and ambitious young generation of today.

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Let us now appreciate those publication within our community which have played a very important role in spreading the well meaning messages and related activities that have been instrumental in our community's development.

"Andhh Rudhi Chitar' was our first ever book, which was published in 1949 AD. The person responsible for this was Shree Govindbhai U. Patel. Under the supervision of Harjibhai Dhanji Pindoria of Madhapar, 'Sabras' a monthly publication was published in Mombasa between 1956 and 1960. Then 'Vikas' was published during 1967. In 1968 another short lived 'Samaj Jyot' was published. A more successful 'Leva Patel Sandesh' under the editorialship of Shree Ramji Ravji Patel was published between 1975 and 1990. This magazine survived for fifteen years. A magazine called 'Sandesh' was first published in London in 1997, but that only lasted for three years.

Thereafter came a three monthly publication by the name of 'Drashty and Darpan'. The same magazine is now published under the name of 'Forward Together' but annually. The main reason for any of these important community publications not surviving for too long was not that of affordability, but of the lack of interest towards our community and its unity. Most recent publication is 'Samaj Setu' a fortnightly magazine.

There are around 30 organisations representing our community in London. They are all associated with Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Community UK. All these organisations work in harmony to achieve their objective.

Under the umbrella of Hindu Council Brent, A number of different community organisations benefit from local

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government's assistance to fulfil their own community needs. In addition, there are a number of religious and community organisations that are very active within the society at large. Hindu Council UK is attempting to unite all these organisations under a single banner to form a formidable community within the UK.

Smaller organisations have the advantage of flexibility in the services it provides to its members. But if a number of smaller organisations unite to form a larger body, then that body is able to accomplish the largest of tasks with relative ease. One such organisation exists in Africa by the name of Africa Hindu Council. This organisation represents Hindus in Africa. In UK at present, our community is between 20 and 25 thousand strong in numbers. We all wish well and support organisation that play an active role in uniting, strengthening and taking our community forward. We should try and get to know organisations that are working on their own to achieve benefits for their members, from the local government, and should assist them to develop so that a greater benefit can be achieved for our community.

Mankind (human being) is a slave to the circumstances he is in at a particular time. What circumstance the next moment will create is not known to him. Bhagvan, Allah or God, has always been the ultimate faith. Man has always lived by the principle, where he makes a decision based on his ability and experience, and then leaves the outcome in the hands of his faith.

Each one of us believes themselves to be more intelligent than others. But it is impossible for us all to be that intelligent. If there is one animal on this planet which takes this belief to the extreme, than that is man. Man uses animals such as cow, buffalo, bullock, horse, donkey and others to achieve his selfish motives

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and then discards them without due regard. This is no less than utter abuse of a living being. Saints such as Mekan Dada, have demonstrated the true ability and value of animals, which is a shining example for us to learn from.

A brief note on Saint Mekan Dada:-

On the edge of the Great Raan of Kutch lies a samadhi of the great saint, Mekan Dada. He and his animal friends Lalio, the donkey and Motio, the dog, are well known for humanitarian services they provided to the lost, hungry and thirsty travellers of the Raan. Mekan Dada would load food and drink on the donkey's back and send it out with the dog into the Raan. The dog would guide the food and drink laden donkey to travellers, lost or otherwise, travelling through the Raan. In this way he used to provide assistance as well as food and drink to weary travellers. The saint used to preach to the villagers too. In the year of 1786, he established himself in Dhrang.

Not everyone who wears a religious robe is a saint, but equally, there is no need to disassociate oneself from anyone wearing such a robe. In reality we need to learn, or know the truth. There are selfish people amongst those who have taken up the religious way of life, and equally, there are those who are every bit a saint but lead a normal social life. It is said that adopting a principle of "only that which is good is ours" always brings peace of mind.

During the British Raj, the English adopted a policy of "divide and rule". To achieve their objective they exploited religion, and the only way they were able to do this was to bribe religious leaders to keep them under their control. Time never stands

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still! Circumstances always change and whenever circumstances have demanded, the time has always produced heroes. One such hero responsible for removing old traditions that were responsible for holding the community back, was Raja Ram Mohan Ray. He opposed the custom of Sati (this is where surviving wives used to be burnt alive on the fire that cremated their husbands.) in British parliament. His 'samadhi' is still in a cemetary in Bristol, UK. Then there was Mahatma Gandhi, who fought against the British Raj in India. We need to be alert and aware against the old myths that have been mistaken for religion, and unite against this element and discard such misleading myths for what they are. A true saint is one who respects all religions. One who criticises other religions/faiths for his personal gains is a scoundrel (''Naradham'').

There are many organisations and trusts active in Kutch today. But it is high time for all these organisations and trusts to start working in unison. With so many organisations working to provide benefit for the same community, will inevitably lead to some people taking unfair advantage. As a result those who genuinely need help will not receive it, and the available resources will be wasted on unscrupulous individuals who will not miss an opportunity.

It is important that our organisations are generous so that, as well as helping people of our community, they do what they can to help people from other communities. As Kabir has said, 'if a bird drinks from a river, the river doesn't notice any reduction in the amount of its water', just as money spent on worthy causes, doesn't lead to any reduction in wealth.

Satisfaction and fulfilment achieved from being useful to others in need, is far greater than being in heaven, so it is written in our religious scripts.

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Present Times

It has been nearly four decades since our community has settled in this country. At present our third generation has reached maturity. Living in a different culture, will inevitably lead to changes in our lifestyle and social habits. Our current generation, due to almost total integration with western way of life and due to lack of understanding our culture, has adopted a way of life and attitudes that are far from those of our ancestors.

When these youngsters visit their parents home land, the experiences they come back with, are quite confusing for them. These experiences are quite contrary to what they have been told about our culture and way of life, and perhaps even imagined. This must cause them to wonder if all the issues we regard in high value within our culture is merely to provide lip service, or just to be preached and not practiced. Even at government officer level, where we would expect unselfish service/ cooperation, we find ourselves having to grease the palm of the people who represent no less than the Indian Government. It is this abuse of authority, they find shocking. Without putting a too finer point on this issue, it is very common for our community members to resort to bribing a police officer for him to look the other way when they are committing minor offences. Incidences such as these promote a culture of expecting a bribe for doing something they are paid to do in the first instance. Such activities should be frowned upon and exposed for how evil they really are, so that future government officers think twice before they even think about asking for a bribe.

On 23rd, November - 1994, Dhanjibhai Jetha Meghani of Madhapar was stopped by customs official, outside Sahara

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Airport Bombay (now known as Mumbai). Having cleared immigration and customs inside the airport, he was stopped again outside the airport, by off duty customs official for a supposed customs re-check, with the intention of extorting whatever he can from Dhanjibhai. Unlike most of us who would have the utmost respect for authority, and as such would allow them to have their way, sometimes even when the authority is being abused, because we are not aware, he challenged his authority and got the officer suspended. At that time Non Resident Indian association (NRI) was helpful, but it is not about getting involved after the event, when it affects you. It is about taking a lead role in trying to stamp out any such parasitic activities which are likely to affect our community. To act is our foremost duty, result comes afterwards. "Every gesture is rewarded", this is a phrase of Lord Krishna as it is written in world famous Shrimad Bhagavad-Gita.

As time goes by, communities and community organisations adapt to changes in their rules and objectives. This is inevitable, and some would say essential, if communities are to move with time. On the other hand all old is gold and new is not worthy, is also not true. The true change worthy of adopting is one that is of benefit to an individual as well as a community. Refraining from criticising others, and being aware of personal shortcomings, is in reality also a part of a true religion. An individual can listen to learned religious gurus, visit religious places, ie go on pilgrims, but as long as that person remains self centred and has no respect for others, it is all in vain. Akha Bhagat (a well known saintly poet) has said, 'listened to katha till cows came home, but still did not achieve a true knowledge ("Gyan")'.

We take lessons from our religious leaders and those who have

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played an important role in advancement of our community, and try and bring up our children in accordance with our knowledge and experiences. We should bring up our children so that they respect the culture they live in, but they should not forget the ways of our culture completely. Elders do whatever they can to bring up their children to adopt the good parts from each of the cultures they either live in, or are exposed to. Despite all their efforts, it is heart breaking when their children respond with phrases such as "why not", "it's not fair" or even "I don't care". It is at times like this that parents bringing up their children in this country wonder if they have failed in their duty as parents. Despite all their efforts to try and maintain a balance between the two cultures, it seems all too often our children are ignoring the importance of our culture and drifting in favour of the British culture. Another thing that is so rapidly being adopted is to feel and boast that nobody has what we have in terms of materialistic possessions. In order to achieve this goal, individuals need to slave day and night like robots. This has resulted in individuals having to give up all those things that he/she may have done had they any spare time or energy. His relationship with friends and family has suffered, and has ended up becoming totally engrossed in achieving this one single goal. Material possessions are not the source of true happiness, so much so that facilities provided by some such items of luxury are a serious cause for concern. In the way of example, science has provided us with the means to make long distance telephone calls at a cost that we can afford. This has served a very useful purpose to keep in touch with our loved ones living in distant land. Modern technology has since provided us with mobile phones. This has lead to a private phone for each member of the family. This has increased the chances of such facility being misused quite dramatically. This is one major cause for concern for parents. Modern facilities

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are useful to have, but it is very difficult to prevent its misuse or even abuse.

Ultimately as times changes, modern gadgets will increase, and the fact is that the future generation will not be able do without them. We need to be aware of our relationship with friends and family, respect for our guests, social ties etc….. , and these values should be vigorously cultivated by parents and community organisations, if we are to achieve desired results.

By Ravji Valji Bhudia

The noah rule: Predicting rain doesn't count; building arks does.

- Warren Buffett

A pessimist is one who makes difficulties of his opportunities and an optimist is one who makes opportunities of his difficulties.

- Harry Truman

Happiness is when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony.

- Mahatma Gandhi

The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard.

- Gaylord Nelson

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Village of Madhapar
Recollection of Community Service

For travelling between Anjar and Bhuj, there was an old road via Bhuvad-Kotda-Reha-Hajapar. On the way there is Kirgaria Mountain. On the tip of the mountain there is a Suteshwar Mahadev temple and a well which is surrounded by banyan trees (Vad), hence it is knows as Vadva.

Also situated on the same route 15 km from Madhapar on the west side is Gangeshwar Mahadev temple and the popular place 'Dhorava' by the river of Dhorava is approximately 1 km away from the temple. There is a ditch approximately 10-12 ft deep caused by the water falling from river Dhorava. This water is retained through out the year. (does not dry out in summer). Travelling towards Bhuj from Suteshwar is the shrine of Shekhapir. Wells and small lakes were built in old days by the road side to provide water for travellers. Religious buildings were built by these places for rest. *These places were given religious status so that they would not be vandalised.*

Bhimaseth's Vaav - Kalyaneshwar Shiv temple

Once upon a time there was a stately road to Bhuj via 'Chechar vara Hanuman', Meghjirai lake and cemetery. This is why the well and Dharam Shaala would have been built there to provide water and a place to rest for the travellers.

There is a inscription by the well (Sellor) as below:-

'Shri Ganeshay namah, Maharavshri 7th Lakhpatji the well was built by Thakar Bhimani for the blessing on birth of a

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son to continue the family lineage. Son Dharamshi and Gangadhar Bhimani completed the well (Vaav) on Vikram Savant (VS) 1817 Vaisakh Sood 12.

Kalyaneshwar Shiv Mandir (Inscription):-

Shri Ganeshay namah: Maharav Shriji Raydhanji Vijay Rajajiv tasya laghu bhrata (brother) Shri Prithviraj tasya Dharmav lohar vanshe (dinasty) Shri Thakar Gangadhar Bhimani tena putra praphirthe Kalyaneshwar shivsaya pa shad kruta tatha Dharma Shalapi kruta asya pratishtha savant 1852 vase shake 1716 pravartmane Shravan Vad 11 Somvar (Monday) dine shuta sa shiv manovanchhit karotu. Shri Swaminarayan Vijayteteram.

Shrijee Maharaj preached in Kutch till VS 1868. At this time Bhima Seth Ni Vaav was on a major route. Shrijee Maharaj used this place to rest while on his travels. Reportedly Shrijee Maharaj bathed in the Vaav and then brought some water and poured over the 'ling'. Shankar appeared in front of Maharaj and with a gesture of both hands together, said, that he was very pleased with shrijee Maharaj for his devotion and bathing him, and told him to continue to be as humble, and disappeared. In memory of this event, and to make this a holy place, a small Shrine containing Shrijee Maharaj's footprint is built here.

Note of this event has been erected on memorial stone on VS 2039 Vaishakh Sudh 6, at this place. Bhima Seth Ni Vaav renovated on 18 May 1983 by Shree Kalyaneshwar Mahadev Seva Samiti. This day is celebrated every year.

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Dhorava Hanuman Mandir (Temple)

In the past the stately road (Raj Marg) passed from Bhimaseth Ni Vaav via chechar vara Hanuman. This road was re-routed via Dhorava and the new Hanuman mandir was built on its side. The Dhorava mandir is very popular and is still developing. There is a big well (Sellor) on the north of the mandir. Following script is found on the memorial stone at this Vaav:-

'Shri Ganeshay namah: Savant 1983 Vaisakh Sood 3rd. Shri Rathod Mistry Mavjibhai Raghavji's (from village Madhapar) son Jerambhai; Jerambhai's son Manjibhai for his worshipful parents' memory and with a permission of Khengarji Savai Bahadur, has personally financed building of this 'sellor vaav" (well) and to sit and rest the Hanumanji's Chhatri for benefits of all. It will give pleasure and prosperity to our souls if a sage uses this place for drinking water and rest. This well was built for this purpose only and not for a personal fame.

Note: The construction of the railway and the stately road (Raj Marg) began between 1900 – 1905 (AD).

Shri Swaminarayan Sarvajiv Hitavah, Swaminarayan Gurukul (a boarding school) was established in 1997 AD. This Gurukul is now very active in providing education and other social services.

Shri Maldhari Mangal Mandir, a boarding school in Bhujodi was established in 1999 AD.

Ibrahim Pir's tomb was known as 'Ibrahim Chhavli'. There used

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to be an annual celebration on the first Friday of the month of Shravan until 1950. The event was celebrated by cooking and providing sweet rice to the poor. After 1950, the celebration is held at Hanumanji Mandir situated at the entrance of the village in the Vathan on every Ashadhi Amas. Next to this place is the land donated by Devuben Jetha Lachhani. The Navchetan Andhjan Mandal (Bhachau) is in process of developing this land for the benefits of blinds and disadvantaged people.

Kutch Dairy

The Kutch dairy was established in 1980 and was known and run as 'Gujarat Government Co-operation (Sahakari) Milk Dairy. There were approximately 72 co-operation milk dairies in Kutch. Approximately, 73,570 litres of milk was distributed daily plus butter, cheese and paneer were made in 1985-86. There is a solar pond project, (this is a project to harness the sun's energy to produce electricity) at this dairy which was the largest not only in India but in the whole of Asia. 125,000 kilo Watts of electricity is produced per year which could boil 50,000 litres of water daily. This huge Gujarat Dairy development project was enterprised and supported by Gandhinagar Gujarat Urja vikas nigam agency –Vadodra, and Tata urja – Delhi. The size of the solar pond is 100 m. length 260 m. wide and 4m deep. Steam was produced by adding salt solvent in this pond.

Shree Swaminarayan Chhateddi (a small shrine) with Paduka (wooden shoes) is situated by Meghjirai pond and trees. This is a well known and popular place for visiting. Inscription as below:

Shri Swaminarayan Vijayteteram Shriji Maharaj bathed and drank water from this pond with the sages (sants). Mr.

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Punja Meghji Hirani of Madhapar, wife Meghbai Mulji and sons Lalji and Ramji Punja had this Chhateradi built for their prosperity and happiness and to share this holy place with the sages and their followers. The footprints (Charanavind) of Shriji Maharaj are engraved here. The cost for this place was 18,000 Rupees and was built in Vikram Savant (V.S.) 2014, Shravan Vad 30, Saturday, date 13/09/ 1958. On the north side this Swaminarayan Baag, there is a government run Industrial Training Institute which has been providing industrial vocational training since 1999.

The cemetery was situated by the river bank in Junawas. But due to the open area this caused difficulty in cremating bodies in the rainy season (chomaso). The new cemetery was therefore built in the Navawas. Incription as below:

'The building cost of sonapuri was donated by Khokhani Shivji Harji & Premji Harji – residents of Madhapar in 1976. A new modern structured garden with statues of saints was built in the area of the old cemetery in Savant 1976 Maha Sud 15 in the presence of Patel Laxman Shamji during Prince Shri Madhubha Maharo Kehngarji era. This new place was officially presented to the Madhapar village on 20 May 1982, Savant 2038, Vaishakh Sud 12, Thursday'.

Education was very scarce in Kutch whilst it was under old sovereignity (Raja-shahi) era. Some organisations used to run classes out of their own desire in some of the villages. However, Maharao Shri Khengarji began to promote the education at the public level. The Darbari School (school no.1 at present) was built by his prime minister. The inscription reads:

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'Maharajadhiraj Mirza Maharao Shri Khengarji Savai Bahadur, mulka Kutch, Prime minister Divan Bahadur Manibhai Jashbhai, total cost Corees 20455, Savant 1941, Ishu Savant (A.D.) 1884'.

On the west side of the bridge by the school is a sellor vaav (a large well with steps leading to water at the bottom of the well) with a round top and traditional carvings of elephants, horses etc. On the nearby Raj-Marg there is a trough for animals to drink water from and the entrance to the steps leading down the well. The inscription reads:

'This sellor vaav was built in memory of the King of Kutch Maharaj Mirza Maharaoshri Khengarji Savai Bahadur's mother Maharanishri ("queen") Nani Ba Sahiba and presented by the minister of Gujarat, a resident of Vadnagar, a Naagar Brahmin, Bahadur Manibhai Jashbai in Savant 1942, Ishu Sanvat 1885'.

Sarvoday Balvatika was founded on 27.10.1971 with the help and support from Sarvoday Mitra Mandal. It is currently run by Bal-ghar Sansthan – Bhuj. There is a full size statue of Dr Baba Saheb Ambedekar in the courtyard. The ceremony for raising the statue was performed by the past prime minister and Narmada Vikas Minister Shri Babubhai Jashbhai Patel on 19.03.1992.

Situated on the west side of Balvatika is a rest house. Once upon a time, this rest house was used by travellers for resting and by villagers for religious functions and recitations. Because of the nearby Shiv Mandir and baths, this place was also used for shradh and saravana (ceremonial rites on death anniversaries).

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Situated on the north side of the Shiv Mandir are memorial stones for members of a Madhaparia family who were killed whilst defending the place and themselves against the robbers in the 18th century.

At the entrance of Junawas there was a public charitable waterhouse (Parab).
Inscription reads as below:-

'Late Patel Devji Ruda Petha Gorasia from Madhapar – In the memory of Late Devji Ruda, this waterhouse was built and presented to the village council. Date of death: 27.05.1964'.

Next to the waterhouse was a Kasamashah Pir's tomb.

Suralbhit – Jadeshwar Mahadev

This temple is situated between Madhapar - Bhuj - Nagor. The ancient temple was very small and was situated on the first small hill.

The following information is derived from the inscription of the renovated walls:

Due to the derelect state of the temple and the statues of the deities, the heir of Kutch Rajya, Maharaj Kumarshri Vijayrajaji was inspired to renovate the temple. He spent Corees 7,000 to build a huge temple with new statues of the deities in VS 1971, Magasar, Sud 6, Thursday. No previous information is available on this temple and therefore there is no mention of any other historical information in the incription.

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The floor tiles in the courtyard have been donated by the resident of Mandvi, Shri Pushkarna Brahmin Lakhu Murar Panwala's grandson Damodar Meghji in the memory of his ancestors. The ceremony was performed by resident of Bhuj, Joshi Dharamshi Dungarshi Vyas in Savant 1978, Vaishakh, Sud Beej, Saturday.

All the workmanship on the stairways and the fencing surrounding Jadeshwar Mahadevji's Temple was undertaken by Shriman Valji Bhimji and Manji Jeram residents of Madhapar. Manual labour was provided by Maharaoshri Vijayrajaji (in the time of Raoshri Khengarji).

In VS 2000, Ashadh Sud Beej (Ashadhi Beej) Mistri Manji Jeram Rathod had undertaken the task of tiling and oil painting of the temple. According to the information gathered from Mistri Manji Jeram, Maharaoshri Khengarji Bava was not very supportive of any restoration projects. In such an environment it was very frustrating to get permission for these types of restoration projects. The project to build stone steps and resting platforms to reach Suralbhit Temple was one of the most difficult task because Khengarji, repeatedly ignored and rejected the application for any improvement. They managed to get the permission from the young prince, Madhuraoshri Vijayrajji, whilst Khengarji was in London. The work was quickly completed well before anybody could change their minds. Upon his return, Khengarji strongly objected to what had been done behind his back. After a lot of pleading and begging by the public and distinguished personalities, he eventually agreed to the changes.

It is important to note that every Monday a member of the royal family used to come to Jadeshwar temple. At the time, it used to be good 400 feet climb and a long walk to enter the temple.

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Many villagers, farmers and patels would come and greet the royalties. As in the days of Khengarji, every Monday of Shravan month a Mela is held at this temple. This Mela was a common occurrence in the time of the king. The royal families of the time used to attend the Mela and prominent musicians, magicians, poets and dancers would perform their acts in and around the guest houses in the vicinity of the temple. In the time of Khengarji, social and economical progress was very slow or almost unnoticeable mainly due to the lack of interest from the king. No major programme of road or railway network improvement were planned or even conceived. Permissions were refused to bring modern vehicles in the area. As late as 1948, there were only about 10 motorcars in Kutch.

Let us come back to Madhapar. To go to Bhajodi, one passes the high school, Patel Wadi, Sadan Wadi and cut across a Ganesh Temple and finally a Masjeed. At the time watering troughs (avaadaas) used to be on the north of the river. A team of dedicated volunteers from a charitable organisation, (Gau-Rakshan Sanstha) which was specially formed to look after the cows, their daily feeds and general wellbeing, provided their services as per their abilities. In 1926 AD the Kanbis living in Kenya decided to donate a portion of their salaries to fund this Sanstha. A warehouse was built to store the dried hay and other feeds for the cows at the south of the river in 1944. The Sadan Wadi too started during this gracious period.

In 1962 AD, the school year 8 was introduced in this Saraswati Vidhayalay. In 1967, plans were drawn to convert this school into a prominent high school offering all the years to matric level. A permission was granted for the school and a large sportsground in the surrounding land. A large area of khadavad was allocated

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for the construction of a new building for this school. This is the Madhapar Saraswati Vidhayalay (MSV) High school. (Khadavad is a space used by the farmers for cleaning grains etc). It was known as Ravari.

A small area of land south west of this was allocated for building a library. However, the library was established in a building opposite the Thakar Mandir by Patel Abhyumitra Mandal and the original allocated land merged with the nearby Patel Wadi.

The building work for MSV High school was delayed in 1968 due to a stay order issued by the court. Once the disputing issues were resolved the building work commenced later that year. An Industrial Training Institute was opened on 4th October 1986.

Patel Wadi was actually established as early as in 1976. Most of the gaam's social and religious activities are performed on its ground at present. But in earlier time, old Patel Wadi was mainly used for mass feasts (Jamanvaar).

The main entrance to the Navawas of the Madhapar is guarded by a Hanuman Mandir. It was renovated in 1925 and then again in 1975. Since 1950 the festival once held at the tomb of the Ibhrahim Pir situated on the bank of Lake Meghjirai, has been replaced by a mela at this Hanuman Mandir. The mela is held on the last day of the month of Ashadh.

Shree Kutch Madhapar Patel Gnati Mandal in Nairobi, Kenya, was established on 25th December 1944. The main aims and objectives was to emphasise the importance of education within the community and to get rid of old and harmful rituals and beliefs which had been hindering the progress of the community.

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There used to be an old library in Junawas, but in 1939 Madhapar Patel Yuvak Mandal started a small library in Navavas. In 1947 some books were donated by our people living in Nairobi to this Library. A library was also opened in Nairobi on 1st April 1957, by Nairobi education committee. At the same time another library was opened in Madhapar, in a place that was rented. There was a lot of guidance and assistance available from the local government office to manage this library. The huge building as we see it today was rebuilt in 1971.

The area in which the Masjid, Shree Ganesh and Shiv temples are situated was once a resting place for animals belonging to local merchants. In Seventeenth Century, the first settlement of Madhapar Junavas had commenced. The Navavas was established around VS 1914 (1858 AD). It is anticipated that a full disclosure of the historical information will be published during 150th anniversary of the Gaam to be celebrated in 2007.

The old Ram mandir was very basic with the roof consisting of old style long horse shoe shaped roof tiles. After some seventy years, in V.S. 1984 on 7th (Sud) day of Vaisakh, the temple was built properly with its protruding tall domes and also a statue of Lord Rama was installed permanently in the temple. Statues of Radha- Krishna and Sataynarayan were placed in the temple in 1943. Also, during this period, the Shiv temple was built, which was magnificently rebuilt recently in VS 2037.

Similarly, Swaminarayan temple was originally built with simple old style roof structure. Then it was rebuilt on Jeth Sud Beej, VS 1984 and the statues of deities were installed in the temple at that time. Fifty year later it was extended again on both sidesand a tall, prominent tower was erected on the facade of the temple.

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Swaminarayan Bapashri mandir was established in 1949 AD and it was also rebuilt in its present form in 1970 AD. In the northerly direction from where the Hanuman temple is situated at present there used to be a traveller's inn and it was available to every one without discrimination. At present time, this inn has been replaced by a huge mansion. This mansion was built around VS 1980.In Junavas, at present, where one finds Panchayat's office, once there used to be the residence and work office of the Talati (Dhruv). The administration of four or fives local villages was managed from this Talati's office. In 1962 AD a village administrative body (Panchayat) was formed for Madhapar. But during 1978 administration of Madhapar was taken over by Bhuj governing body. The villagers were not in agreement with this outside control and as a result the Gaam was divided in to two regions, Navavas and Junavas in 1989. Each region is now independently administered by a separate locally elected governing body the Panchayat.

In 1957 AD, a youth association, Sarvoday Mitra Mandal, was formed to develop and support local youth in their sporting interests and activities. In the same year, a women's day centre was setup to provide a platform for the development of skill and knowledge among our ladies and young girls. In the early days, the centre was in rented accommodation and on a smaller scale, but proved to be very popular for night classes for education and also for sewing and other useful skills. A huge building which we see at present was actually built on 30th June 1965. So many other centres and associations have since been established.

In Junavas, near Thakar Mandir, Ramubai Seva Samiti used to run a food shelter to feed the hungry and poor. This centre is still operating near the Shiv Mandir, in Junavas, just north of the

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railway station. A very similar organisation, Mafat Ramroti Kendra was formed on 5 September 1974. In the early days, the volunteers used to cook and serve hot meals everyday. But nowadays, the centre helps many needy people by donating urgently needed medicines and grains.

Shri Ravji Kanji Bhudia inaugurated the children's nursery at the river bank on 29 January 1963. It was managed by Madhapar Gnati Mandal, a local village committee, for five years. In 1968, its management was taken over by Gujarat's Family Children Development Centre. Under their management, many other activities such as adult education, childcare, women's group and youth development were initiated.

Before the Saraswati Vidhyalay School was established, there use to be one main Darbari school and some private tuition houses run by local teachers. Shri Ramchandra Maharaj was first head teacher of Sarswati Vidhyalay when it opened. Most local teachers from the gaam were employed by this school and with their support more classrooms were eventually opened.

The decade between 1980 and 1990 was a very special one for Madhapar, because during this time more committees and organisations were formed than at any other time in gaam's history. They were all sincerely involved in various duties and activities for the sole benefit of the gaam. Even today, many of these organisations are still functioning and providing vital support and expertise in social and economical development of the local communities. Most local development projects were aided by the financial donations from local and overseas donors and together with very hard working dedicated local volunteers most of these projects were completed in time and had been a period

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of great pride and self confidence for the gaam. There always had been friendly rivalry between different working groups, which had led to a healthy competition to finish the projects on time and within the set budget. This has in turn brought great pride and respect. Although there was always an urge to compete, there never was any bickering or quarrelling amongst the organisations. These qualities of our elders are something we must try to develop and maintain for the benefits of our great Kutchi community.

Shree Swaminarayan Phool Wadi (a flower garden) was first opened in the month of Fagun, VS 1998. Since then, this elegant garden and its vast compound have taken a prominent place in the gaam. The Text etched on a stone wall at the inauguration states as follows:

> *Shree Arajan Karsan of Madhapar has donated a sum of 1200 Corees towards the preparation of the land for this garden compound. The preparatory cost, 825 Corees for this well was generously donated by Nanbai Shivji on Fagun, Vad 6, VS 1998.*

Opposite this Phool Wadi stands Madhapar's "elders care home", known as Apana Ghar, meaning 'our home'. The land donation for this home is dedicated to Nanbai Jetha Samji Vekaria and her family by Shree Vishram Jetha Vekaria. There is a great deal to appreciate and understand about the history of this organisation. It had to overcome several disruptions, legal challenges and objections before the building project for the Home was completed. Most of these incidences were well published in a community magazine published by Kutch Leva

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Patel Samaj. A proposal for this project was first aired by Mr V. K. Patel in1976 at the Gaam meeting in Patel-wadi. It was further discussed at a later date in 1982 and then after two years, on 1st April 1984, the project to build the Home was finally accepted. The detailed preparatory work then started without any further complication. The whole community worked in unity and in aroma of brotherhood and as a result, today we have a grand home which will stay as pride of Madhaparians for many generations. This project was a typical example of how unity in a community regenerates strength, stamina and belief to overcome most obstacles. It is stated in Gita, that god's blessings are always there when any work is carried out with unity and belief in one self.

Shree Manav Seva Trust was established on 25th March 1984 with an aim to assist Bhuj Mahila Kendra (the women association) in its activities and also participate in other humantarian projects.

The Tree Plantation (Vraksha Ropan) committee was formed in 1984. Its aims and objectives were plantation of trees in Kutch to bring a little bit of greenery in the area and to delay soil erosion, a serious natural problem made worst by lack of rainfalls in Kutch terrain.

The rows of trees from Sarswati Vidhayala to Kari-Mori growing taller each year were planted by this committee. The Talaav Samiti was also formed during same period. It has constructed several water reservoirs at various locations around vast dry landscape surrounding Kanbi Villages.

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Keshar-Baag stands at the bank of the lake Kari-mori. This Baag is a creation of an ambitious vision of Bhudia Family. It caters for the whole family, who flock to the Baag every Sunday to have picnics. The Baag is well reputed for Sunday picnics amongst all surrounding villages including Bhuj.Just south of Kesar-Baag, in fact right next to it is Smruti – Baag. This Baag is in memory of the five youth who tragically died and one lucky survivor in a freak and cruel incidence that occured on tragic Tuesday, 2nd September 1969 when a group of Sarswati Vidhayalaya's pupil went for a school outing at Tapkeswar. A prominent figure, V K Patel used to arrange for the pupils to go on a picnic every year. During the afternoon of the said outing, a group of boys wondered off in to the surrounding hills. They found an unexploded bomb buried in sand, totally unaware of ghastly nature of their finding. They thought it was a metal ball and may be of some value. As they were all inspecting (mishandling it), the bomb exploded, in an instant there was unbelievable carnage and those five boys were no longer with us. Sixth member of this group, being a little distance away managed to survive without any injury at all. Dilip Hirani the sixth member and a very close friend of these boys has built the Smruti-Baag in their memory. This whole memorial project was his personal ambition and his sentimental nature is reflected in this Baag.

Names of five friends who lost their lives so tragically are listed below:

Harji Karsan Varsani	DoB 26/01/1958
Vishram Khimji Mepani	DoB 24/05/1956
Mahendra Vishram Bhudia	DoB 12/07/1956
Shivji Kunverji Bhudia	DoB 24/11/1957
Lalji Govind Gami	DoB 11/12/1957

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Around 1940 AD, the school was run under the headmastership of Shree Ramchandraji Maharaj. During this time games such as football, kabddi, khokho used to be played in the ground just east of Sonapuri and west of Karimori Lake. Shree Sarvoday Mitra Mandal was established on 29 May 1957. The centre organised several sporting events and organised daily games like football and volleyball. As time went by most games were played on the ground of Sarswati Vidhyalay. The most noticeable and rapid improvement in gaam's sporting activities came after 1989 when a separate independent organisation, a Sarvoday Sports was formed with total backing and support of Londoners (Madhaparians settled in UK).

A splendid sport ground was built on a barren land next to Karimori. A surrounding boundary was established on the ground with many trees and bushes. A numerous sporting tournaments and other social and cultural events are held on the ground annually.

In the western direction of Madhapar, stands Jakh Dada, a place of religious pilgrimage for devotees. Just as Peers and olias used to fight and give their lives to protect the general public, Jakh is a Shrine of such heros. There is another Jakh near the town of Punareswar on the Nakhtrana Highway. At Punareswar, there is a very historically important temple of Shiva. Every year, at place of Great Jakh a massive Jakh Mela is held in the month of Bhadarvo (11th Hindu calendar month). The Mela starts on first Monday after Bhadarvo Sud Poonam an lasts for three days. Comparatively, a smaller version of this mela is held on the second Monday in Bhadarva, at the Jakh in Madhapar.

Bhujiyo Mountain stands on the other side of this Jakh. There is

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a Bhujang Naag temple at the top of the Bhujiyo Mountain. Once a year, Bhujiya Mela is held on an auspicious day of Naag Pacham. During the periods of kings and kingdoms, there used to be held a long Royal procession to attend the mela and to offer royal prayers and respect to Bhujang Naag. A few paintings reflecting on these grand mela and royal procession are still displayed at Aayna Mahel. The king riding on a well decorated elephant used to attend the festival at the valley of the Bhujiyo Mountain. A cruel ritual of animal killing, particularly of a goat, was performed under the order of attending royalties. A young girl from untouchable (Harijans) community used to do a Tilak (a symbolic mark) on the forehead of the king.

Be careful to make friendship the child and not the father of virtue, for many are rather good friends than good men; so, although they do not like the evil their friends does, yet they like him who does the evil; and though no counsellors of the offence, they yet protect the offender.

- Sir P. Sidney

Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear and punishment.

- Mohandas K.Gandhi

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Present Generation

'Responsibility & Awareness'

Inherited ancient buildings and culture are our invaluable assets. We have utmost moral and religious responsibility to look after them. We should make sure that no generation would ignore this duty. We should take pride in our old-aged culture and traditional values and should do all necessary to preserve them.

Another thing we talk about is our blind faith embedded in our heart. We would be disturbed by the stories about ghosts and evil spirits, which are heard through word of mouth. In reality, people get scared by this sort of talks. But most of the time, this is the stunt pulled by some crafty people who are trying to make money by using evil spirit and 'Mataji'. We should fight with brave heart against the nasty, evil people who try to mislead and brain-wash our people.

Let me talk about my childhood experience. When I was about five years old, one morning we went to relieve ourselves in the open uninhabited field, a bit further away from the temple of God Hanuman, called 'SANKAT MOCHAN'. In those days there was no in-house sewerage system. Everyone from the town used open grounds as toilets. We were sitting there on one morning when all of sudden we noticed smoke emerging from distant. We got frightened and started running, crying out, "ghost...ghost..." all the way back to the temple of the Hanuman. On reaching the temple we looked back and we saw a black figure. Assuming the figure to be a witch we ran home in fear. We looked back from our door step and saw a shepherdess

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(Rabaran) in black dress approaching us. By a way of an explanation she said to our parents that she saw us sitting on the ground so she decided to move away and sit a little bit away from us. But instead she saw us running with fear so she followed us home to assure us that she was not witch (it is believed that a strong fright can cause a child to fall ill), so that we would not fall ill by the fright. The smoke was merely the morning fog.

I remember another incident which took place when I was twelve years old. I heard that when a woman dies during her pregnancy she would be reincarnated as a 'witch'. However, if we would drop the mustard seeds on the way to the cemetery, she would be so busy collecting these seeds that she would be too late to enter the village. Once some of my friends entered in a friendly debate and we all agreed that all these sort of things are not real and decided to prove this. On a very early morning we got together at oto (this is a stone-bench) by the aforementioned Hanuman Temple. With our hearts full of bravery and minds full of eagerness, we awaited appearance of the witch. A few moments later we saw a hazy figure which appeared to be kneeling on the path and picking up something. It was still dark and the morning fog made it very difficult to see anything clearly. For a few minutes our hearts sank with fear. However, not to look like a coward I advanced towards that hazy figure against my friends' warnings. I reached the figure and instantly recognised it. It was Ratan Masi (aunty) who lived on the same street as I. She was collecting cow-dung to use for the cooking fire.

I went back to the temple and told my friends that we got fooled by our own stupidity and superstitious beliefs.

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Let us have a look at one more incident about so called ghosts. This story is about a ghost commonly known as "mama". We were told that the bank of lake "Meghjirai" was haunted. This mama (the spirit that haunts the area) is capable of taking any form. Like my father, I did not believe in ghosts, evil spirits or any other kinds of superstitions.

My father often slept overnight at our farm especially during the harvesting time. Our farm was near the Meghjirai Lake. One night, all the neighbouring farmer friends gathered at our farm. During the late night they heard a cry of a baby. The sound was coming from the direction of the lake. All the farmers claimed that the crying was that of the mama and we should ignore it. However, my father was already heading towards the direction of the crying sound. The farmers tried to stop him but he would not listen. They were scared and their hearts sunk with fear when they saw my father disappearing into the darkness of the night. Their fear was unnecessary as they saw my father returning only a few minutes later. He said "this little lamb was screaming of fear because he got trapped in the mud while trying to drink water from the lake."

We often get blinded by the superstitious stories and during that state of mind we do not see the difference between reality and imagination.

We have all heard these kinds of stories many times over the years, but when we ascertain the reality, there is not much into it. No one can say for certain whether or not ghosts or witches exist. But the future generation should stay alert and not waste their life by giving in to such superstitious stories and blind faith without logical thinking.

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Paap taru Prakash jivla re…
Tari dambhline chalva nahin daoo….

Stories of sacrifice and dedication are always encouraging to others. It is every parent's duty to put aside their petty mindness and prejudice and encourage the new generation to serve the community to the best of their ability. If a needy person overcomes his shyness and tries to take advantage of our little bonfire (Tapnu), we would not loose any heat from the fire-heat. We would still get the same amount of heat as before, but knowing that we have brought comfort to others would give us pleasure. It may be that the person gaining comfort may add fuel to the fire to sustain it for longer. Serving the community has the same characteristics. Our own initiative and creative activities to serve the community, most certainly will inspire others and they too would try to be very useful to the community.

The narrow-minded orthodox people will always try to oppose new and revolutionary ideas, mostly due to their personal ego and ignorance. However, the noble people will always think of improving the society whilst the wicked ones will attempt to fulfil their own selfish desires by keeping the society in the dark. Once there was such a group of people who used to oppose education amongst our people by misleading them with their orthodox ideology, for the sake of their own selfish prosperity and material gains.

Today, many organisations are running old-people's home. Their intentions are to provide a place for our elders living abroad to lead an independent life in their old age in their homeland. This is necessary because the parents want to retire to their home land and children are unble to leave their families and go back

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to look after their parents. The local population is unwilling to take their parents to elders' home for the fear of loosing their inheritance, since traditionally the real estate has always been given to the family member who looks after the parents in their old age. It is sad that people are deprived of their respected and dignified existence in their later years for the sake of financial gain.

If you cannot look after parents, then why do you not allow them to consider living in a care home? Is it because we fear of losing inheritance? This is not really fair! These charitable organisations have good intention of keeping parents independent enabling them to live their life to the fullest. But some people turn a blind eyes to these organisations' good intention and unnecessarily oppose them. We wish people would stay alert and try to be helpful to such organisations. It is also the duty of the management of these organisations to ensure that our elders are respected and not allowed to feel unwanted.

Even though we have democracy in our country, we drag away towards the false promises given by the politicians during the elections without giving proper considerations. Beware of these false promises. The middlemen always use them for their own advantages. We should be brave and oppose these adverse elements in the society. Religious places are not beyond reach of these sorts of activities. To achieve their personal interests, such elements of the society conveniently forget the community services and human welfare and always carry out in human activities within the compounds of the religious centres. We should be competing for the humanity and generosity, not for the illicit and atheistic practices.

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Today we have all the modern facilities and perks, but we still do not fight these non-social and harmful activities within the society. Why? Because we are too frightened and self-centred to get involved. This attitude is harmful to all the organisations serving the humanity and it is an insult to every service-minded citizens.

It is every citizen's duty to serve the organisation without selfishness and shame. One should not compromise one's duties to such organisations for the sake of misguided relatives. Suggestions are always welcome for every activities of an organisation. Management of some of such organisations sometimes becomes careless and ignores the opposition. Such organisation does not last long.

It is evident that a constructive opposition encourages the management to stay alert and active and consequently the activities of such an organisation are always successful and fulfilling. It is a sad fact that sometimes the organisation's activities come under strain because of the unnecessary and unconstructive disputes. It is every citizen's moral duty to oppose unsocial and harmful activities against a town, a society or a humanitarian organisation. We must always stay alert and be co-operative for this common fight.

> *Whenever a man becomes a demon, he favours money to humanity, wealth to truth, materiality to spirituality and self-attachment to equality.*

We have talked about life and now let us talk about the distorting stories about the after-life and soul…….

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If you want to get rid of ghosts, then you need to get rid of the people who prey on the fear of ghosts by misleading. In the same way, if you want to remove superstitions, then you need to get rid of selfish impostors and hypocrites. If someone's relative died then that person could break down in tears and lose courage and may lose the balance of mind. At that time he must be given consolation and sympathy. In my opinion the religious discourse for twelve to thirteen days only brings back all ill memories and feelings and makes for more unhappiness and distress to the person who has just lost his/her loved one. Such person is more vulnerable and an easy target for the fraudsters and impostors who use religious rituals for their selfish motives.

Once in state of feverish mind I felt myself being dragged to a court in the sky. Next moment I found myself in front of 'Chitragupt' (God who keeps account of good deeds and sins of all the souls). His clerk opened his ledger and read out my deeds. The Court heard that I, under the umbrella of a community leader and a volunteer, had used public and charitable funds for the advantages of my personal relations and helped them with their education. Also I had used human relief and cow-charity funds in favour of my well-wishers.

Whilst my deeds were being read, a disgraced minister, who was involved in a communal riot, was dragged inside the court. He was screaming at the policemen who brought him to the court. Influenced by his screaming and shouting I shouted at top of my voice at the clerk and turned to Chitragupt (Judge in this court). I said "Sir, respected God, this clerk of yours is foul mouthing my deeds, however your scripture of this Mrutyu-Loke (Earth) says that one should treat everyone equal and

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never to discriminate. Also, does it not say that all auspicious and good deeds always start from your own home and never help others at the cost of your own family? So before you judge me bear in mind that all my deeds were in accordance with, what I understood was, written in these scriptures".

After hearing my arguments, Chitragupt said, "Who dragged this nasty one here? Is his suffering on Earth not enough that you brought him here? Go throw him back to earth." When I was dragged to the court in the sky I flew painlessly but when I was sent back to earth, I was thrown down. On the impact, I uttered god's name and woke up from my delirious mind. I found myself on the death bed surrounded by my relatives and other people and they were preparing me for my last farewell. Seeing me awake one of them said "did I not tell you long before that this one would not die that easily. We should have taken him to the cemetery sooner. Now that he has come back from the dead, this wicked man will commit even more sins".

A man's virtues are tested when faced with misery and difficult times. Everyone should ask themselves a question, "what did I do when our locality was struck by the major earthquake or communal conflicts" Did we adhere to required level of honesty and our true religious duties?

Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become action. Watch your action; they become habits. Watch your habit; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

- Frank Outlaw

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'Scream of the soul'

Where I come from and where I would go!
Search your soul a little!
Remove your ego a little!
Search your heart a little!
Is it your deeds that gives misery to others?
Sometimes ask your soul a little!
And give up your love for this deceptive material world!
Neither ego lasts forever or you!
Think what are you doing and you meant to do!
It is still not too late think again!
What you asked others ask yourself!
Do not worry about others but worry about yourself!
Never know tomorrow may be your time to die!

(Translated from a poem published in 'Sandesh', in February 1978)

False friends are like our shadow, Keeping close to us while we walk in the sunshine, but leaving us the instant we cross into the shade.

- Bovee

When you dig another out of their troubles, you find a place to bury your own.

- Anonymous

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Kurmi – Kanbi History

Please Note:-
Kurmi – Kanbi's history: before we came to Kutch, and their settlement in Kutch. This article was published in Shree Kutchhi Leva Patel Community UK's Souvenir in 1997. Thereafter the same article was published in Cutch Social and Cultural Society's Kutchhi Leva Patel Apnu Sthalanter, VS 2060, and Ashadh Sudh beej (Ashadhi Beej), 20/06/2004 AD. Both these articles had mistakes in them. This version with those mistakes corrected is now being published in this English translation of CSCS. Despite our best efforts, we apologise for any errors that may have escaped our notice.

Sthalantar

Human race has since time in memorial being on the move. Mankind has come to Bharat from many different parts of the world, and met with a warm welcome from the locals (people already living there) enabling them to mix and join them in their way of life. Similarly, people from many parts of Bharat have moved to Kutch, and settled. These people have lived in Kutch for many centuries with and as people of Kutch.

We do not know who original people of Kutch were. It is believed that they were people who had a gypsy type (Rabari, Bharvad, Jat, Ahir and Kathio) life style and lived off the livestock.

With passage of time as well as these gipsy like people, many others from Sindh, Punjab, Rajesthan and Gujarat, came to Kutch. Amongst these were, Kanbi, Kathi, Ahir, Rajput,

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Lohana, Vadia, Bhatia, Bhanusadi, Brahmin, Mistry, Sorathia, Muslims, Meghavar (Harijan), etc…. Communities and sub-communities, came to Kutch and settled. These communities are proud to be known as Kutchies.

Communities with their different values live in harmony in every part of the world, however not as many as there are in Bharat. In Bharat there are more than 3000 communities and sub-communities. We now attempt to learn about one such community known as Kurmi (Kanbi).

Communities living in each area of Bharat, in one way or another are descendants of sage or saints (rusi munis). In the same way Kurmis are not mere farmers, but their family line descends from one great sages Kasyap and Kurmi rusis' family line of Chandravansi's sons of warriors (Kstraya). This fact is acknowledged during our wedding ceremonies.

Who are Kurmis?

Bhu Asya Asti eti kutmi
Meaning:- Kurmi is a person who owns land.
It is believed that our forefathers, Kurmi warriors, used to live in Gandthar (now known as Kandahar in Afganistan) before 2500BC.

Afganistan as we know it today was part of Aryavrat – Bharat Vars. Long after Purankal (this refers to time, Pandavs and kauraw era). Around 2000 BC, Kurmis crossed the Hindukush mountain range and came to "karad" and "Lev" part of Panjab, where 'Luv' and 'Kush' (sons of lord Rama) had settled, and Kurmis with their hard work made the land more productive.

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It is a popular belief that Kurmis are not decendants of Lord Rama, but it is likely that from the names of lands known as Karad and Lev, these people came to be known as Kadva and Leva Kurmis.

Land of Punjab was always very fertile, and with Kurmis hard work made it even more productive. This resulted in people from surrounding areas and of other faiths, to not only rob, but also to forcefully interfere with the community at large and convert the locals to their way of life and to their faith. Kurmis resisted this to the best of their ability. Eventually there came a time when Asarians, Greek, Laktian, Pathayan, Hun, and Shak, in an organised way, invaded not just in Punjab but Sindh, Malwa (Rajesthan) Bihar and Gujarat.

It became very difficult for Kurmies to concentrate on farming the land in Punjab, because they had to fight against the changes that were forced on them by invaders from other areas. Punjab thus became less productive. Many Kurmi families started to leave Punjab and move to Kushavati (patana) capital of Magadh (Bihar) and joined armies of then king Chandragupt. These Kurmis in Bihar, those who came from Karad (in Punjab) became known as Khari Kurmi, and those who came from Lev, came to be known as Lari Kurmi.

Before 75 BC, death of last king of Shak Kaniksk, Veer Vikram (Vikram Savant is named after this king) became king of Malawa (Rajestahan), he was popular and commanded a strong army. He defeated Sak and drove them all the way to Punjab and out of Bharat. While returning from Punjab, he brought with him families of Kurmi warrior with him to Malawa and Bihar, where he provided assistance to settle. These Kurmis used to provide

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military service to defend the Kingdom, and used to farm the land in peaceful times.

In 78 BC many Kurmis with Gurjaros living around Gujarat town in Punjab, moved and settled in Bhal Pradesh (known as Gujarat today). They brought with them the skill to farm the land and make it productive. (There is a belief, though unsubstantiated, that one group of Kurmis come direct to Kutch from Punjab via Sindh)

Kadwa and Leva who left Punjab are of the same community. To maintain their link with their origin, they retained their identity as Kadwa from Kerad and Leva from Lev of Punjab.

Some Kurmis' who came with Gurjaros' from Punjab, settled in North Gujarat, Mathura and around mount Abu in Rajesthan. Though their origins are Kadwa and Leuva, but they call themselves Anjana Kurmis, decedance of Sahastraarjun. Jat of Punjab and Anjana are of the same origins. Maharaja Ranjitsingh of Punjab was a Jat. These Anjana Jat Kurmis' also live in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajestan nad North Gujarat.

Those Kurmis settled in Bihar for many years served in armies of prince Bindusar and (Samrat) Emperor Ashok. Some of these held prominent positions. During the first century of AD, they won a large area in battle, and established their independent capital in Madhavati in Bihar.

Last Kurmi Raja of Madhavati, Vrajpalji, for whatever reason had to leave. With his treasures and a small army, he came to Shreesthal (sithpur) in Gujarat, and settled. There after in 156AD (VS 612) at an auspicious moment/occasion, he founded Unza

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village. Vrajpalji was a Shivpanthi (follower of Shiv). He built a mandir for Umiyaji (Parvati, Shivas wife) his Godess, and settled in Unza.

In 612 VS, Son of Godha Patel, Shivsinhji in Unza Gaam fell out with descendant of Vrajpaliji, Vrajpalji the second. Shivsinhji moved to Asarva in Bhilmal central Gujarat, with his friends and relatives and their families, and settled there.

Descendant of Kurmiraj Vrajpalji, Vrajpal the second, some reasons unknown to us, moved from Unza in VS 802 to Edar, and established Kavar Gaam.

There after due to Vaghela Raja, Karan's fool hardiness, corruption and instability prevailed in Gujarat. Muslim Badshahao, Sultans and Subao came in power. Because of this Gujarat became unsafe for Hindus. Many Kurmi Parivars moved to Champaner, which was ruled by Rajputs, and settled there. With passage of time they began to take part in running of the state.

In 1483 AD, Mahamad Bagda, attacked and conquerd (won) Champaner and captured vairsinhji, Kurmis leader together with other Kurmis (soldiers) and imprisoned them in Ahemdabad.

In 1490 AD Solanki Raja of Gujarat, Sidhraj attacked Malava. This war with Yashovarna, King of Malava, went on for twelve years. This had a profound effect on the farming Kurmi community of Malava. They complained to king Sidhraj of this hardship. In response, Sidhraj gave them land in Charotar, in Gujarat, as per their request. So these Kurmis from Malava came to settle in Charotar.

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In VS 1775 Gujarat suffered a severe drought. During this time many Kurmi families moved back to malava, where Ahalyabai, queen of Nimad state gave them desolate land to live on and farm. Within a matter of few years with their hard work, Kurmis transformed this land into productive farming land. As time passed, they began to accept this land as their home, but still maintained contact and social ties with their Kurmi brethren they had left in Gujarat. These Kurmis' are known as Gujarati and Nimadi Kurmis in Malava. In this way Kurmis have not been spared the upheaval of lifes and natural (kudarati) ups and downs.

Kadwa Kurmis' have settled mainly in Vadnagar, Unza, Sidhpur, Patanvadi, Sourastra and most of North Gujarat. Where as Leva Kurmis' from Punjab travelled to Bihar, Ajamer, Marvad, Bhinmal (Gujarat) and via Patanvada settled in Adalag. Here they built Kuldevi Annpurna's temple. Leva Kurmis' moved on from Adalaj to Charotar, Bhal, Vakal and from Kanam to Kanthmal and Kapadvanj via Savli to Chapaner. From here both Leva and Kadwa Kurmis' travelled to Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat and Valsad and finally spread to villages in Gujarat.

How did Kurmi – Kanbis came to be known as Patels?

Between 1412 AD and 1573 AD, Sultans and Subaos used to elect a person from gaams of Gujarat. This person was known as Mukhi. Mukhi is derived from an Arabic word 'Mukta'. To address this person with respect the word 'Patalik' was used. This word became Patel. As time went by, first Mukhis family members were addressed as Patels and eventually all Kanbis came to be known as Patels. From this, Patel became Kanbi's surname but not a community.

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How did Patels (Kanbis) came to be known as Patidar?

VS 1759 and 1703 AD Veer Vishandas, who was a Patel, organised a large gathering of all Patels (Kanbis), in Pipalad. At this gathering he invited prince of Aurangzeb Badshah, Shahjada Bahadurshah as a special guest. At this time, Veer Vishandas registered as Patidar (Pati is land therefore land owner), instead of patel in official record at this gathering.

Amin and Desai

During Veer Vishandas time, tax from gaams in Gujarat was collected by Nagar Brahimns. These Nagar Brahmins were harassing Kanbis. Veer Vishandas used his influence with Mogul Badsah and Subao and appointed Kanbis as tax collectors. Kanbi tax collectors in Mogul Raj came to be known as Amin (amin means trust worthy). Tax collectors in Peshva Raj came to be known as Desai.

Are Kanbis warriors?

On 25 – 26 May 1906, at Bharehatta (gaam) in Chunar district of Gujarat, under the chairmanship of Honorary Magistrate Shree Vandravanvala and Goswami Shree 108 Shree Radhacharan Vidhya Vajira, a massive gathering was convened. At this gathering learned Pandits from Kashi, Sages and Saints, Brahmins and prominent members of other communities including those who were opposed to this idea, were invited. Approximately 3000 people attended this gathering. Secretary at this gathering Shree Deepnarayansinhjee, made references to old scriptures indicating that Kanbis' are indeed warriors

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and have the right to wear upnayan (janoi – band of thread across their shoulders like Brahmins wear). Pandit Damodar Shashtri of Kashi also presented similar evidence in support of this claim. A number of pundits, in particular one Madanmohan Pathak of Kashi, raised their views against this motion. After much discussion chair declared that Kanbis are warriors and have the right to wear upnayan (janoi – band of thread across their shoulders like Brahmins wear)

English historians opinion of Kanbis:

1) Chhatrapati Shivaji and then rulers of Gwalier and Satara states were of Kanbi origin. Ref: Hunters statistical Account of Bangal part 11.

2) Bhonsle from Nagpar, Sindhiya of Gwaliar and King of Satara were all Kanbis. Shivaji and many of his generals were Kanbis. There were Kanbi rulers in Gorkhpur and Gujarat. Ref: Cornegese racis tribes and customs of Oudh.

3) Gurjars who came to Gujarat were mainly Levas (Leuva) and Kadva, the two leading divisions of important classes of Gurjar Kanbis. Ref: Bombay Gazetteer, Vol 1, Chapter 1, page 4.

Above is a brief note on Kanbis' history prior to reaching Kutch.

Kanbis in Kutch

Kurmi-Kanbi originally from Ganthar (Kandahar-Afganistan), came to Punjab, and from there to Gujarat and settled there.

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We attempt to find out how and when many Kurmi-Kanbi families came to Kutch from Gujarat. There are a number of different beliefs of how Kanbi warriors came to Kutch. According to one such belief, around 300AD in the era of Raja Chandragupt Mouraya, large groups of Kurmi warriors came to Gujarat from Panjab. Some of these groups via Sindh, Rajesthan and Radhanpar came to Kutch and Sourastra. Second belief seems to suggest that, Leva-Patidar, from Gujarat came to Kutch during King Lakha Fulani's Reign, and settled in Vagad, not only this but they were the first to plant Bajari in Vagad Kutch. (King Lakha Fulani was born in 855 AD and died 979 AD)

There are many similarities in the way of life between Kanbis from Soutrastra (Halar) and those from central Kutch meaning Bhuj, Mandavi and Mundra. These Kanbis are from the same group and there are intermarriages between these two groups (Kutch and Halar). With the passage of time there are some differences in dialect and attire. Majority of Kanbis of Kutch and Sourastra are followers of Shree Swaminarayan Sampraday, and some of Vaisanav Sapraday (Sanatanis'). Whereas majority of Leva Patels of Vagad are followers of Vaisanav Sampraday, and some of Swaminarayan Sampraday. However Kuldevi of all Leva Kanbis' is Maa Annpurna. There is Annupurna's temple in Adalag near Ahemdabad.

There are approximately sixty thousand Leva Patidars in Vagad. Many of these live and trade in Bombay, as well as active involvement in government. There are no intermarriages between Patidars from Vagad and those living in central Kutch. The reason for this is not clear, perhaps it is known by our forefathers.

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Records show that Kadva (Kurmi) Patidars came to Kutch in VS 1580. Their ancestors lived in Unza and moved to Champaner. There they performed the function of a ruler's representative (Mukhi, Patel). Due to a dispute with the local community Padhiar, they moved to Chhaniar Gaam, near Viramgam. Some of these, for reasons unknown went to Girmathe Gaam, and joined Piranapanth (Muslim) of Imamshah. Peer Imamshah Sayed, came to Gujarat in 1449 from Iran. He camped in the outskirts of Girmatha Gaam near Ahemdabad. He managed to trick some Leva and Kadwa Kanbis into joining his faith. With time his followers grew in numbers as more Kanbis joined him. Though increasing in numbers, Piranapanthis' were in a minority and were discriminated against by the Hindu Kanbis' and others in the village. They took their complaint to their leader Imamshah, who advised that they should move to Kutch.

By the order of Imamshah, Velo Patel and Nakar Patel came to Vagad in Kutch. There they founded Shikra Gaam, Velasar Talav (small Lake) and constructed Imam Shah's monument. Here they established a separate Piranapanth community. Many Piranapanthis' moved to Shikra. As population of Shikra grew, many families started to move to different parts of Kutch at their convenience. From Shikra Vela Patel's decendant, Valo Patel came to Manukuva in VS 1702. There they fought with Garasia (land owners). In this fight Valo Patel and his associated were killed. Their memorials are still there today. Decendants of Vala Patel goes by the surmane 'Velani' derived from their ancestors name (Velo Patel). It is important to note that majority surnames of Kadwa Kanbis are based on their ancestors' first names, where as those of Leva Kanbis are based on the name of the place of their origin.

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Following this, many Kadva Patidar families from Gujarat, one by one moved to Shikra in Vagad, and from there to various Gaams in north Kutch.

For many years in Kutch Kadva and Leva Patidars lived as an integrated one community. Their way of life and customs were very similar, and still are. In VS 1832 on Posh Vaad 13 main Representatives of Piranapanth, Pragji Kaka organised a conference of all Piranapanthis' in Nakhatrana. At this conference he stated that despite having joined Peer Imamshah's sect in VS 1592, Kartak Sood Beej, we still have Brahmins performing wedding (Chori) and death (Chita) ceremonies, and tried to pass a resolution that these ceremonies must stop from this day onward. There was opposition to this, but the motion was carried and resolution passed. Any one who does not abide by the requirement of this resolution and continues to perform these ceremonies would deem to have broken the law of this community and would no longer be regarded as a member (out cast of the community). In this way, all ties with Brahmins were savoured.

Those who opposed above motion were victimised and had to endure many difficulties for their views, but they remained committed and eventually left Pirana Panth. Some joined Shree swaminarayan Panth (sect) and others with the help of Suprakhyat Pandit Pitamber of Gadhasisa joined Veddharm (Arya Samaj). They took up Upvit (janoi).

As a result of the resolution passed in Nakhtrana, although Pirana Panthis gave up Hindu rites, their family names, way of life and even mentality are still remains very similar to those of Hindus.

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After some four hundred years existance, Piranapanth is now known as Satpanth. With passage of time new generations have since corrected their ancestor's mistakes in parts of this sect. This is evident in the fact that today there are Laxminarayan, Swaminarayan and Shiv-Umiyas mandirs in Kadva Patidar gaams. Equally, there are still Patidars that are devoted to Imamshah.

Anjana Kanbis' in Kutch

As well a Kadwa and Leva Kanbis', there are Anjana Kanbis' in Rapar district of Kutch. They have come from North Gujarat. Their way of life, attire, social habits are different to those of Kadwa and Leva. Their names contain 'Sinh' and 'Choudhri' and diet and social habits are similar to those of Rajputs. Similarly Kadwa and Leva Kanbis, they are also associated with farming and livestock. Level of education is poor and financially they are not well off. Though not skilled they are very hard working, as a result their youth are working towards narrowing the gap between youths of other Kanbis'. Anjana Kanbi ladies are skilled at embroidery and are very enterprising. Majority of Anjana Kanbis' are followers of Vaishnav Sapraday (Vaishnavi). Their Kuldevi is Maa Aburda, whose temple is on Mount Abu.

Life is changing at a very fast pace at all levels. We need to change in step with the times. We need to reach a compromise amongst our different communities and sub-communities, religion sects and social rules etc. to form a single Bhartiya Patidar Samaj, and exist as a single community, to adopt humanitarian way of life. We can over come many hurdles, not just those of an

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individual community but those of all communities, if we live and let live in peace.

Recently there have been a number of Patidar gatherings in Kutch, where there have been proposals to remove differences between Kadva, Leva, Kala, Chuda and Anjana Patidars, and form a single Patidar known as Bharatya Patidar community.

Kurmi-Kanbis' migration which began in ancient times is still ongoing. From Gandhar to Punjab then to Gujarat and finally to Kutch. From there to Africa, United Kingdom, America, Australia and Europe. Where ever they have moved to, they have through their hard work and dedication, progressed at all levels, and are producing wealth instead of crops (Dhan instead of Dhaan). Where ever a Kutchi Kanbi may live, in time of need for either his mother land or his chosen land, he is always generous in providing support to overcome any difficulties. While Kanbis' tongues may be some what course, but heart are filled with warm feelings. The size of his hands are slightly larger and he would willingly give with both hands but will think twice before taking a pinch full, this is why it is said:-

Kanbi koi vase nahi, Kanbi vase karod
Pet bhare badsaho na, hal thi badhe hod

Ame kutch na manso, Amaru vahlu vatan chhe kutch
Ame tap tip janiye nahi, baki dil na ame swarchh

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Our Kutch

On glancing through the Hindustan/Bharat's (India's) map, farthest west of Gujarat state, one will see a district of Kutch. During the rainy seasons (Chomasu) the water fills the Rann (Desert) of Kutch, and the Kutch looks submerged in the water. Kutch is prominently surrounded by the deserts and sea.

On its east the Nanu (little) Rann joins the Kutch to the state of Gujarat, whilst the western border joins the Arabian Sea (Arabi Samundra). The north of Kutch is mostly a mass of desert, Motu (large) Rann expanding all the way to the Pakistan and on the south is Gulf of Kutch.

Like any other deserts of the World, Ranns of the Kutch are not merely made of sand-dunes. Some parts of the Ranns are filled with the water and other parts are made of the salty fields, sand-dunes and muddy swamps.

Kutch is a mountainous area and the varying size of the mountains and their peaks makes it look very picturesque. When the sun is setting behind these mountains one can not resist temptation to take photos.

There is no single river in Kutch which flows through out the year. However, in rainy-seasons water runs to ranns, or water reservoirs/dams or it flows to the sea.

The nature's greatest gift to the Kutch is the Kandla Port. This is one of the largest Ports in India and it's fully equipped with modern loading and unloading facilities. The Port is regularly frequented by major cargo ships from all over the world. Kutch

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also has another port called Mandvi. The sea shore around Mandvi is made of natural beaches, which are very picturesque. There are also small ports such as Mundra, Lakhapat, Koteshwar, Tunna and Jakhau.

The weather in Kutch is hot and very dry. Even during the Monsoons (rainy seasons) the rain is irregular and therefore droughts are common occurrences. The Shiyado (winter) is very cold and Unado (summer) is very hot. The wind during these seasons adds the severity of the temperature. Because of the sea shore the climate during the night is very pleasant.

Original dialect of Kutch was called Kutchi, but being part of Gujarat state, Gujarati is spoken widely. The inhabitants of the Kutch are known as Kutchi. Two Kutchi phrases are well known amongst Kutchi: "*Bhai toji bhalai"* (Thank you, brother) and "*Maa Toji gaal nanya"* (Mother, you are the best). Various casts (tribes, gnatis) live together in religious harmony and tolerance. Generally population is hard working, peaceful and little bit of risk takers.

Today throughout the world, Kutchis are successfully settled and reached to the higher positions in various professions and businesses and are proud of being Kutchis. Wherever they live, the Kutchi people celebrate Kutchi new year on every Ashadhi Beej (second day of the month Ashadh) and thus keeps the memory of Kutch alive.

Anjar, Gandhidham, Adipur, and Kandla (a new port) are the main towns of Kutch.

Kutchies are famous and popular for their traditional crafts such

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as gold/silver engraving (mina-work) stone-carving, sculpture – work, embroidery, fabric-weaving and colouring, leather-craft and salt farming. Lime stones, marble, gypsum, lignite and benzenes are mined. Grains, cotton, lentils and peanuts are grown, and handicrafts are also produced. Even today one can witness these activities all over Kutchi villages and towns, such as Bhuj, Mandvi, Naliya, Mundra, Anjar, Adipur, Khavda, Bunny, Kera, Gandhigam, Kandla, Reha, Madhapar, Bhujodi, Bhachau, Nakhtrana, Lakhapat and others.

In Kutch, one name was most famous that was Shree Ramshinh Malam. He was the pioneer of Kutch's traditional industries, such as ship-building, glass work and palace building. He built various palaces and museum. One of such palace was Ayna Mahal (A castle with mirrors) in Bhuj. Unfortunately, the palace was heavily damaged during the earthquake of 2001.

Kutch is largest disrict of Gujarat. Its capital is Bhuj which is situated in the shadow of a mountain called " Bhujio Dungar". Each year on day of the " Nah Panchami" a festival is held and devotees from the surrounding towns and villages come to participate in the festival and as well as in the Pooja of Bhujang Naag at the temple built on the top peak of the mountain.

Bhuj city boasts many government offices, major banks, hospitals/ clinics, museums, schools, colleges as well as major universities. Many houses are built in the society plots with modern outlook as well as facilities. In the middle of the city there is a lake called Hamisar Talav. There are many public gardens/parks in the middle and around the Talav. A temple and a library are also situated in its vicinity. An Air-port is just outside the city.

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Many villages have been established in the vicinity of Bhuj. Amongst these villages, the biggest village is Madhapar which is situated about 3 Km away from Bhuj. This village boasts many public parks/gardens, big crematoriums, Madhapar Patel Gnati building, primary and secondary schools, an ITI centre, sports centres/grounds, temples, mosques, public library, kindergarten, hospitals, Ladies Centre etc. The village has all the modern facilities. On the outskirt of the village is a place called Nana Yaksha, where people worship the statutes of 72 horse riders. A big Mela is held on a Monday of the month Bhadaravo which is attended by thousands of people.

Kutch district offers many places of visits and interest such as Mandvi Beach, Kandla Port, Narayan Sarovar, Bhuj Airports, palaces, museums, parks, dams as well as the places of worships such as Jesal Toral temple, mosques, Hindu temples and Jain Derasars.

Kutchies (the people of multi faith and multi races) are always ready to welcome you to their Madare Vatan (Mother land) Kutch.

Finally I would like to quote a Doho (a part of a traditional poem) which can be heard often in many Kutchi & Gujarati cultural events which goes like this:

"Shiyade Sorath Bhallo ane Unade Gujarat
Chomase Vagad Bhallo ane panjo Kutchdo Baare Maas"

By Shree Lalji Samji Gorasia

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Brief History of Kutch

The history of Kutch may be divided into two periods, ancient and modern, before and after the Jadeja conquest nearer to the beginning of the fourth century. In old Hindu scriptures, the province is mentioned under the name Kutch, which means a tortoise. Early notes on Kutch are available in Greek Literature. Alexander (325 BC) had retreated with his army by sea through Kutch. In 142 – 124 BC, Kutch was a part of Menenders Kingdom which stretched from the Jamuna to Saurashtra. Soon after this (120 BC) the Graeco-Bektrian Empire was over thrown and the Scythians, known to the Indians as Shakas, established themselves in Kutch and other parts of north Gujarat. Defeated by Vikramaditya about 56 BC they came back between 20 and 30 years later and under Yeukaotschin founded a dynasty which, in turn was, in the first century of the Christian era, overthrown by Parthians whose power stretched from Sindh to south as far as Bharuch. The next mention of Kutch is in the early part of the eighth century. During this period, the Arabs started their military expeditions by sea on the Kathiawar and Gujarat coasts after they had conquered Sindh. In the ninth century they had made settlements on the Kutch coast. Al Biruni (970 -1039) has identified Kutch by its present name indicating that an estuary of the Indus kept this area green and fertile. Early in the seventh century (1023), Bhimdev I (1022-1072) of Anhilwada-Patan fled to Kanthkot in Kutch due to an invasion by Mohamud of Ghazni.

The modern history of Kutch may be said to date from its conquest by the tribes of Samma-Rajputs from Sind. This took place and was completed during the fourteenth century. Early in the fifteenth century (1410), Muzafar Shah (1390-1411),

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Sultan of Ahmedabad, defeated the chief of Kanthkot. Despite this defeat, though nominally under dominance of Ahmedabad Sultanate, Kutch remained almost independent. During the time of the Mogul Emperor Jahangir, Rao Bharmalji of Kutch went to Ahmedabad to pay his respects and offered nazar. Jahangir was much pleased with him, gave presents in return and freed Kutch from paying tribute on the condition of giving Muslim pilgrims passage to Mecca. In 1741, Lakhaji Rao placed his father in confinement and snatched the rule of Kutch. Rao Lakhaji was a great lover of literature and art. He established a college at Bhuj for imparting training in poetry which continued till 1948. He was also a master builder. After his death Rao Godhji ascended the Gaddi. He soon had to face an invasion from Sindh ensuing, the famous battle of Zara, where 3000 people were slain. This was a period of great turmoil in Kutch.

Rao Raydhanji embraced Islam and started to harass Hindus to convert to Islam. People rose in rebellion and imprisoned the ruler and established an administrative council. Jamadar Fateh Mohamed, a Muslim general, rose in the limelight and established contact with Hyderali of Maysore to fight the Britishers. Kutch suffered a severe earth-quake in 1819, preventing Sindh waters from flowing into Kutch. The British established their hold on Kutch and appointed a political agent in Bhuj. Rao Desalji requested the British Government to appoint a regency council till his heir apparent was ready to rule the state. In 1860, on the death of Rao Desalji, Pragmalji II came on the throne who ruled till 1875. Rao Pragmalji was succeeded by Rao Khengarji. On his death in 1942 Rao Vijayrajaji took over the rule. He died in February 1948. Maharao Shree Madansinhji the last ruler integrated Kutch with the rest of India on 1st June 1948.

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The present district of Kutch is formed out of the former native state of Kutch and 10 enclave villages of the former native state of Morvi. After 1947, it was part of 'C' state, administered by the Government of India through the Chief Commissioner.

In November 1956, the states were re-organised and the bigger bilingual state of Bombay was formed with Vidarbha Marathawada, Saurastra and Kutch regions and Kutch district became a part of the bigger bilingual state.

Lastly, Bombay state was bifurcated on 1st May, 1960 and separate state of Gujarat and Maharashtra was formed. Since that date Kutch district is part of the Gujarat State.

By Nirmal Vasvani

"There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something tomorrow."

- Orison Swett Marten

" When you have a great and difficult task, something perhaps almost impossible, if you only work a little at a time, every day a little, suddenly the work will finish itself."

- Isak Dinesen

There are two kinds of people; those who do the work, and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group, there is less competition there.

- Indira Gandhi

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Shyamji Krishna Varma

Shyamji Krishna Varma the doyen of revolutionaries who steaked their very lives for freedom, was the greatest son of Kutch, the land of adventure. He was born in the turbulent days of the first war of Indian independence on 4th October 1857, at Mandvi, in Kutch. He was born in a Bhanushali family. His mother died when he was five and his father married again and went to Bombay. Shyamji was brought up by his grandmother.

Shri Mathuradas Lalji brought him to Bombay and he stood at the top of his class in every examination and won the scholarship instituted in the name of Gokuldas Kahandas Parekh. Seth Chhabildas Lallubhai was so impressed with this bright young man that he took him as his son-in-law and Shyamji married his daughter in 1875.

Impressed by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, young Shyamji started a great parikrama (visit) of prominent Indian cities like Lahore, Varanasi, Poona, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Baroda, Surat and Nasik and propagated the teachings of Arya Samaj.

"At the Sanskrit scholars" seminar in Nasik, Justice Gopalrao Deshmukh was impressed by Shyamji's oration (speech) and suggested his name to Sir Monier Williams, professor of Sanskrit, Oxford University in his work of 'world Sanskrit Encyclopaedia'. Shyamji went to England and there he studied at the Oxford University. He also completed law and was called at the Bar from the Inner Temple. In 1884 Shyamji returned to India.

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Shyamji was very agitated by seeing the condition of Indian people and the filthy riches, the few wasted on inanities. He had opportunities to see closely how the mindless rich squandered money while the multitudes toiled for a single meal, because he had worked as dewan or adviser in princely states like Udaipur, Junagadh and Rutnam. While his soul was undergoing this inner torment, he met Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Lokamanya. In this meeting Shyamji saw his path clearly charted for him. For Tilak had shown to him the need to organise the fight for freedom from the distant shores of Europe. Shyamji Krishna Varma therefore went to England in 1897. There his life's mission seriously began.

Shyamji Krishan Varma started an independent paper 'Indian Sociologist.' From the very beginning this paper had to face repression of the authorities. So Shyamji continued its circulation clandestingely through packaging of textbooks as medicines or cosmetics.

He also organised 'Indian Home Rule Society', a political body. This attracted many revolutionaries. Shyamji reared them with a peternal care. He became the nucleus of all revolutionary activities outside India. The great revolutionaries that were raised here included Veer Savarkar, V.V.S. Aaiyer, Lala Hardayal, Naren Chattopadhyaya and others.

Shyamji was behind 'execution' (not an assassination) of Curzon Wiley who was notorious as a 'terror' in instituted scholarships in the names of Rana Pratap, Shivaji and others for students who came to England for higher studies. It is almost a great freedom fighters who's who when one lists the beneficiaries of

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these scholarships: Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Madanlal Dhingra, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya and others. Shyamji opened the 'India House' which housed brilliant students and others fired with the sole passion for their country's freedom. Dadabhai Naoroji, Lala Lajptrai, Madan Kama, Sardarsing Rana, noted editors, leaders of women's organisations and all those who cherished freedom above all were associated with India House. The hostel annexed to India provided shelter to many deserving students. India house India. Madanlal Dhingra shot him at a meeting organised to honour Wiley. Shyamji was the father figure for all Indian revolutionaries.

Russian writer Maxim Gorky called him 'Mazzini of India'. In the evening of his life Shyamji lived in Geneva, Switzerland with his wife Bhanumati. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited them in late thirties. He wrote, 'while ascending the dark silent stairs of this house, I had a feeling that at some turn I might have an encounter with death!' The couple lived without domestic help, friendless, incommunicado! He had already donated his all, to different causes so when the end came on 31st March 1930 he had a last long look at his wife and left this earthly life. Shri Prasad Gupta who happened to be in Geneva for an international conference went to see him and then rushed to the hospital as the great visionary was having a last glance at his dismal world. Shyamji donated 10,000 (ten thousand) Francs every year for a thesis on sociology at Geneva University another like sum for medical aid to poor French children. Twenty Lakh (Lakh is one hundred thousand) Rupees to Indian students. He donated 50,000 (fifty thousand) Francs for a hostel in Paris for Indian students and one lakh to a Mandvi (Kutch) hospital. His wife died within five months of his death.

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Shyamji Krishna Varma died an unsung, unwept and unnoticed hero, except for a bunch of fellow revolutionaries in the death row at Lahore prison; prominent among them Sardar Bhagat Singh whose 'Vande Matram' resounded the chain decorated stone walls of the prison.

Ref. Organiser New Delhi, Kutch special, July 17, 1994.

There is nothing more becoming any wise man, than to make choice of friends, for by them thou shalt be judged what thou art: let them therefore be wise and virtuous, and none of those that follow thee for gain; but make election rather of thy betters than thy ineriors, shunning always such as are poor and needy; for if thou givest twenty gifts, and refuse to give the like but once, all that thou hast done will be lost, and such men will become thy mortal enemies.

- Sir W. Raleigt

" The world stands aside to let anyone pass who knows where he is going"

- David Starr Jordan

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Dinbandhu John Hubert Smith

An Englishman (Scottish) Mr John Hubert Smith came to Kutch as a director of education in 1901. He, not only at education level but also at an archaeological level did a great deal to improve Kutch between 1912 and 1915. Thereafter he has given his leaned opinion on his research on archaeological findngs in Kutch. Based on this, Dr. L F Sparthe of London published two volumes of memoirs on ammonites of Kutch during 1927 to 1937. As a result of this Mr Smith's collection of Kutchi ammonites is regarded as unravel among the archaeologist community. For his assistance to the local Raj, Mr Smith came to be known as Smith Sahib. More than this on the humanitarian basis he was known as a Dinbandhu (brother of poor) he became very popular amongst the poor and needy community of Kutch.

Mr Smith had a special affection for the poor and needy community of Kutch. In order help these people, he formed an organisation called Permanent Poor Relief Fund (PPRF). The organisation helped with not just immediate materialistic needs, but also encouraged the people to help themselves by providing them with necessary tools and advice. Smith Sahib used to donate a large proportion of his salary to charity that helped poor and needy people. PPRF used to donate 75,000 Rupees to the needy. Mrs Dorothy Varley Smith Sahibs daughter, living in London, also made a large contribution to the efforts of PPRF. As an English foreigner in Kutch, he devoted his whole life to Kutch, and as a Kutchi he died in Kutch on 23/01/1947. As such he maintained his ties with Kutch till the very end. As a lover of Kutch Shree John Hubert Smiths epitaph at his final resting place in Kutch Bhuj, reads as below :-

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J. H. Smith
THE ETERNAL GOD IS THY REFUGE
AND
UNDERNEATH ARE THE EVERLASTING ARM

Is being right more important to you than reaching agreements or getting along with others? In a world where knowledge and education are valuable commodities, it's easy to get caught up in wanting to be right all the time. You're smart and educated, so why shouldn't what you say be right?

Think about this - even if you are right, if asserting that fact result in damaged relationships, failures to reacha agreement, or excessive time wasted arguing, is being right really worth it?

When you allow others to be right, you open yourself up to other perspectives, and you are perceived as a person who is willing to negotiate and reach agreement; not just argue to the death.

When you are experiencing conflict try saying, "You are right" Watch how the dynamic of the conversation changes. Certainly there are times when being right is the only path to pursue: But when being right becomes your mantra on every point, every time, that's when you need to step back and ask yourself why it is so important.

Try finding ways in which the other person is right: It's a great starting place for negotiating your win-win solution !

- Dianna Podmoraff

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About Kutch

The land of Kutch has been known by various names in our scriptures and by visitors. In Sanskrit Kutch means kachbo (Tortoise). The shape of Kutch's land mass is that of a tortoise. This land has submerged in the sea and rose as many as three times. It is believed to be older than the Himalays, by archaeologists. This land is very susceptible to earth quakes and it is classed as quake zone 5. Earliest recorded large quake happened on 16/06/1819. Many lives were lost as well as destruction to property and land on a huge scale. During this quake, approximately 2000 square miles sunk by 12 feet, in western part of the Large Desert (Rann) near Korinal. The movement of land during this quake was so drastic that the flow of river Sindhu was diverted and Kutch was deprived of its waters.

Between 1819 and 1956, there have been over 72 quakes of varying strength. Anjar was devastated in the quake of 1956. After this the next major quake was on 26 January 2001 (India's Republic day) at 9:46 AM. This was reported to have measured 6.9 on the Richter scale. This only lasted for about 45 seconds but the devastation to property and lives were on a scale not seen before.

Comparison of destruction in Kutch and Gujarat:-

	Kutch	Gujarat
Human lives	18,498	662
Injuries	136,048	30,013
Buildings (town)	128,631	65,030
Buildings (villages)	107,189	61,252
Animals	8,096	952

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In addition to above businesses of varying sizes suffered a loss of over 20 trillion Rupees. Of this Kutch alone suffered a loss of more than 10 trillion Rupees. (source Kutch Mitra 01/07/2001)

Kutch has suffered many difficulties at natural, cultural and political levels, nonetheless this has helped in making Kutchis of strong character, adventurers, hard working and generous.

History of an era after the demise of Sindhu culture in Kutch is not very clear, but according to a note by Sir J M Cambell, in Bombay Gazette, before Indo Greek and Shako rule in Kutch, there were a few settlements of Adivashi living in the wild (jungle adivashi). The fire destroyed the jungles of Kutch, and with passage of time, what were forests became grassland. This attracted people with live stock to move and settle in this land from surrounding areas. These people are Gowal, Bharwad, Jatt, Meaar and Punar as we know them today.

Around 714 AD Chaarans from Rajestan and Kathis from Sindh arrived and settled in Kutch. They established Pawergadh, and controlled central and south Kutch. Coastal part of Kutch was under the control of Arabs, though they did not rule the area. Well before Europeans came to India, Kutch had commercial ties with Arab countries via sea routes. Because of this Arabs were frequent visitors and often stayed on the coast. Thousands of years ago Kutchis' passed Kutch borders and established commercial bases in other countries (Jangbar (Zanzibar) is a prime example). Kutchi sailors (Kharvas) are well known for their navigational skills throughout the world.

Arabic historians Al-Biladari in 840 AD and Iban-Khurdad in

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912 AD have recorded that Arabs were driven away from Kutch coast by King Poolkeshari.

Sama-Jadeja Rajput kings came to Kutch from Sindh. Mod and Manai of Sama Clan started to rule Kutch. Lakha Fulani was a powerful ruler of this clan. In 1147 AD Jam Lakha of Jadeja Clan came from Sindh and started to rule Kutch. From this time on till 1948 AD there were in total 28 kings of the Jadeja clan in Kutch. Last of these were Maharao Shree Madansinhji. 11th King of these 28 Kings was Rav Shree Khengarjee the first, who founded Bhuj. 22nd King Maharao shree Raydhanji the second, in 1779 AD came to throne at the age of just 14 years. He suffered from some form of mental disorder, and the king mother looked after the kingdom. Taking advantage of his mental state his advisers and bodyguards, who were Arabs, Siddis and Pathans, were misleading him.

During this time Maharao Shree Raydhanji met a Muslim Fakir Mohamad Sayad Pannah. Under his influence Maharao Shri Raydhanji adopted the Muslim faith. Not only that but he became such a fanatic, he ordered that Hindus should convert to Muslims in the streets of Bhuj and to enforce this, he gave his representatives permission to use any means to do this. From there he tried to take the forceful conversion to Mandvi, where people of Mandvi revolted against this with physical force, and he was forced to abandon this practice in Mandvi.

On returning to Bhuj, he tried to force the same faith conversion on his subjects. This was met with a strong revolt and Jamadar Fateh Mohamad imprisoned Maharao and established an independent council to govern the State.

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Cromwell of Kutch

Jamadar Fateh Mohamad was from an uneducated and poor Notyar Muslim family. He rose to the rank of a Jamadar from an ordinary soldier because of his hard work, dedication and impartiality.

It was because of his bravery in battle field, East India Company (the company via which British entered and ruled India) was unable to enter Kutch.

As proverb goes "Ghat foote Ghar Jaay", during time of political anarchy, greedy and power hungry people of Kutch made it possible for East India Company spy, already settled in Anjar, "Bhurio Bavo" (Captain MacMurdo) efforts to gain foot hold in Kutch. This brought pressure to bear on Jamadar Fateh Mohamad and on 23rd October 1809 he was forced to sign an agreement with Colonel Walker, but still resisted total British rule in Kutch.

Cromwell of Kutch, Jamadar Fateh Mohamad contracted plague and died at the age of 71 on 5th October 1813.

Captain MacMurdo (*Bhurio Bavo*)

Captain MacMurdo East India Company spy, disguised as a naked Sadhu, (naga baava) lived in Kutch Anjar for quite some time and was known as 'Bhurio Bavo'. He used to advise uneducated people of Anjar which made him popular with the local public. He built a bunglow with multicoloured pictures painted on the walls. This bunglow with the paintings still stands today in Anjar.

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He had a British flag in the grounds of this Bungalow, and used to behave as a self appointed ruler. Because Captain MacMurdo was instrumental in East India Company entering Kutch, he was appointed political agent.

Captain MacMurdo died at the age of 33 years with Cholera in Warnu Gaam on the border of Kutch Raan. His epitaph reads as follows:-

In memoriam
Captain James MacMurdo
First British Political resident in Cutch
Died of Cholera at Warnu on 28th April 1820.

" It is wisdom to believe the heart"

- George Santayana

To keep your charcter intact you cannot stoop to filthy acts. It make it easier to stoop the next time."

- Kathrine Hepburn

"When patterns are broken, new worlds emerge"

- Tuli Kupferberg

" The gain in self-confidence of having accomplished a tiresome labour is immense."

- Arnold Bennett

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Madhapar

SHREE SARVODAY SPORTS CENTRE MADHAPAR

How Madhapar came to be is revealed by examining related history. Approximately 1500 years ago, Grand son of Shree Chhachhag Abhesinh Solanki, and descendent of Vachhra, Raja Karamsinh, in the year VS 828 was in Halar. Twenty third generation of this Raja Karamsih was Shree Hemraj Hardasna. One of the sons of Shree Hemraj Hardasna was Shree Bhima Hemraj who used to live in Someeya Patan. With his father he moved to Dhanety. Hemraj's third generation, which would be Bhima Hemraj's grandson, Madha Kanji Solenki, came to Madhapar from Dhaneti, in VS 1503. At the space between present day's main vehicular highway and the river, he put up an ornamental arch and based on the name Madha Kanji, he called the place Madhapar. History suggests that this is how the village was named Madhapar. This was approximately 75 years before Bhuj was established in VS 1605 (1549 – 50 AD). At the time the main means of transport were bullockcarts.Major,or perhaps

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the only route, at the time, was near the current railway line behind the crematorium, passing through megjiray talav (lake), past Chechard Hanuman to Dhorava river and then passing through Bhima Seth Ni Vav, which is now called Jadeshwar Mahadev and Dharam Shala. From there, on to Kukma then through mountains towards Hajapar and Anjar: from there past Vagad through desert to Kathiavad and to Dwarka and Somnath. Second branch from Vagad through desert towards Palanpur and uttar (North) Gujarat, probably.

Madhapar is now split in two parts, Navavas and Junavas. But when did our community members arrive in Madhapar? This is quite important for us and future generations to know.

It is said that people with Madhaparia surname today, whose ancestors were farmers of patel community, must have been known as Ghadia. They would have first come with some Solenki (Kunbhar) and settled some 300 to 350 years ago. Following this from uttar (North) Gujarat, Maheshana and Saurastra's Halar via Anjar's Bhuvad gaam, people settled in different village settlements (gaams) and some in fields in outskirts of these gaams. This is probably how more people came to join the settlements originally started by Madha Kanji. Families that came from Bhuvad would be Bhudias, those from Halar, Halai, and other surnames derived from first names of their forefathers. Perhaps this is the way, people from our community came to Madhapar approximately 300 to 350 years ago. At this time, in the area that we can define as being the land in between, navavas and junavas, the settlement probably consisted of no more than 8 to 10 huts of very basic enclosures serving as homes for that many families. These families would have been from a number of caste, such as Kathodias, Muslims, Bharvads,

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or Rabaris. And people would have had no problems with a kumbhar setting up a home in this small community. This is how we would have started to arrive and settle in Madhapar.

As population grew, the design of the hut would develop to contain a room; the construction would be of stone, cow dung and sand. Forecourt would have thorney bush fencing. With population growing further junavas would have an arch to denote entrance and a town square. Where the kando tree stands today, in front of Talati's house there must have been the gaam's padar (padar is an open space just outside the gaam where live stock gathers in morning and evening) in those days. It would be reasonable to assume that, where there is a small Shiv mandir and Thakor (Raghunath) mandir is where people would have settled to start with. On the other side, there would be Muslims settlement and to the east of this Gorva community, who are Gors to the lower Caste. Surrounding this settlement of various castes and creeds of people, would be the land that would be farmed. As settlers grew further in numbers, around the old entrance (zaampo) to the Gaam, is where the new entrance (zaampo) stands today. This is where the Gaam would have grown to in its subsequent phase. Population that settled mainly were Mistris, Khojas and Kanbis and they began to grow. The stone masons, carpenters and metal workers as well as mistrys gained courage to venture further a field to earn a living. As they started to travel further in search of work, Kanbis' as well as Mistrys' would have travelled to Kutch from Sorath, and in particular Halar around this time.

Mistrys were involved in railways and coal mining. As their business and income grew, so did congestion in the village. In VS 1913, 1857 AD, Kanbis considered establishing Navavas and in VS 1914 Vaisakh Sud 7 and 1858 AD Navavas was

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established. As Historians would know 1857-1858 was the era of revolt against the British Raj, and the time when Madhapar Navavas was established. What a coincidence. The time of new thoughts and a new way of life, which began at that time still prevails throughout the kanbi community all over Kutch (chovisi).

At the place where there is a Hanuman Mandir, which is known as Kandavala Hanuman, a shiv Mandir to guard the Gaam, and at a distance of 150 yds a Rama mandir, with this notion, Ravapar Gaam was established. Despite the given name of Ravapar, the name Madhapar proved to be more popular and so this Gaam came to be known as Madhapar. Around the Kandavala Hanuman, Shiv Mandir and Ram mandir, there were some 15 to 20 Kacha Makan (Huts) spread out in that lacal area. From the very beginning our occupation was that of farmers. Due to poverty, our ancesters had a very basic life style. Khojas and Mistrys who lived in junavas were educated, and our forefathers used to borrow money from them to start farming. Lack of education; lack of rain, which is so crucial for farming, and in addition to this demand for exorbitant amounts of taxes from local Raja were contributory factors as to why we were unsuccessful at farming. In 1921 two of our elders Bhimji Manji Gorasia and Premji Jiva Pindoria set off on an adventure to Africa with Bhatia and Mistry in a boat from Tuna. A short time later some more of our elders went to Africa and they then sent permits for their relatives to join them. They used to send their savings to their families via (Hundi) to support their families back home. These ex farmers through their hard work, progressed in their individual line of work and rid them selves of poverty. After the Second World War in 1943, in 1945-1947 at the beginning of independence, a ship route was established to Africa.

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At the time young men and even younger boys were called to join their elders for work and study respectively. As time passed, many of these young men through education became business men or were able to gain good jobs. Some studied as far as degree level and became graduates and got jobs in Government.

If we look at those of our ancestors who have achieved the highest educational level, the very first in our Kutchi Leva Patel Community was Late Hiralalbhai Jina Gorasia. He passed matric at Alfred High School in Bhuj and then went to Mansukhlal Chhaganlal Krushi Vidhyalay. At Krushi Gou Vidhya Bhavan in Anand he did a degree in agriculture and graduated in April 1946. He was Madhapars first student to attain such a high qualification. In 1952 Late Khimji Lalji Bharaparia did a degree in architecture at Manchester, UK. Following this shree Harishbhai Govind Halai was first to achieve a barristers degree at London UK. These youths of that time pointed the way for all Madhapars youth to higher education.

To promote religion, education, community spirit, unity and patriotism as well as to support and improve activities that were already organised under the constitution of the community, Shree Kutch Madhapar Patel Gnati Mandal (Nairobi), Kenya was established. In the beginning it provided tuition to primary level, temporary accommodation for Hindus travelling to and from India, a place where wedding ceremonies could take place and a place where religious functions could be organised.

In 1950, this Mandal raised funds to start Saraswati Vidhyalay Prathmic and Kanya shala (girl's school) in Madhapar, from Africa. Great many numbers of our elders working in Africa gave a months salary toward this worth while cause. Because

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of lack of education and the suffering that resulted amongst our ancestors, education was regarded as a valuable asset. In 1955, it raised 25000 shillings towards the cost of building a Hospital in Madhapar, claimed the remainder from Kutch District Local Board and completed the hospital. This hospital was then given to the local board to run. This organisation also raised money to help the victims of quake in Kutch in 1956. In addition to these it also raised money to look after cows (Gau Rakshan).

People of Madhapar (may be people with ancesters from Madhapar) haven't settled just in London, but in the whole of Europe, Africa, USA, Australia, Canada and Arab countries. As a result of education, wealth, and community spirit together with experiences of these people, and the support from fellow Madhaparians in Madhapar, Madhapar has made tremendous progress in its development. In Kutch the largest (within Kanbi community), most advanced and modern, Kashmir of Kutch, that's Madhapar. People who work in Bhuj and surrounding area including those who work for the Government (Government employment is very highly regarded in India) all prefer to live in Madhapar.

Active organisations' and places of interest in Madhapar

Kesarbaag (smruti bag)
Shree Navchetan Andhagen Mandal
Shree Madhapar Leva Patel Apnu Ghar
Shree Madhapar Sarvoday Sport Centre
Shree Madhapar Samshan Bhumi
Shree Madhapar Patel Gnati Saraswati Vidhyalay
Shree Ravji Kanji Bhudia Balmandir
Shree Radhabai Manji Lalji Pindoria Balmandir

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Shree Madhapar Gutter Samitee
Shree Madhapar Navratri utsav Mandal
Shree Gayatri Mandir
Shree Bala Hanuman
Shree M S V High School
Shree Madhapar Gau Rakshan Sanstha
Shree Ram Roti Kendra
Shree Varsani Balmandir
Shree Kutch Madhapar Patel Gnati Mandal
Shree sarvoday Mitra Mandal
Shree Abhyuday Mitra Mandal
Shree Manav Seva Trust
Shree Madhapar Leva Kanbi Gnati Patel Vadi
Shree Ambedkar Smruti Bag
Shree Madhapar Juno and navo Vaas Gaam Panchayat
Shree Sadan Vadi
Shree Madhapar Yaksh Mandir
Shree Madhapar Swaminarayan Mandir
Shree Raghunath Mandir
Shree Swaminarayan Sidhant Sajivan Mandal
Shree Madhapar Talav Samiti
Shree Sarvoday Balvadi

Madhapar Karyalaya was formed in Kutch on 26th December 1968. Great many people have played an important role in establishing such an organisation which has stood for all the values in life and in our community that we hold dear. People from all sectors have put in a tremendous amount of effort which has led to the development of our communities both in London and in Madhapar.

In UK our community is moving forward in terms of wealth and

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education. More and more of our youth are obtaining qualifications to a degree level and higher to a higher degree, taking advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. As time goes on these youth of our community are taking up other jobs as well as our fore fathers trade of costuction work. But with this success, they are slowly but surely drifting further and further away from our family values, culture, Samaj, religion and family way of life. Education is not a mere means to monetary wealth but it should be a path to self fulfilment, humbleness, respect, discipline and tolerance towards fellow beings. Our greed for wealth is making us blind to the fact that we are loosing sight of all other aspect education should bring.

Is this change in our way of life acceptable? Do we simply accept it? Do we have a choice? What steps are there that other communities are taking to prevent this change? Can we as a choivisi (24 gaams of Kutch) take any steps to prevent this? Can we as a community justify this? Will we get the support?

Will our people in Madhapar, Africa, UK, and in other countries unite? What actions can we take? Will we simply go with the flow, or will we manage to oppose this trend and reverse it. These will be the tests of 21st century.

Madhaparians living in India, Africa, UK and other parts of the world are on the path of progress, and our greatest hope has to be that they maintain partnership with our community and gain encouragement from each other.

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Rampar

A HOLI GANGAJI PLACE AT RAMPAR - VEKRA

It is said that once Sage Rukmasmshyun became anxious to see Lord Rama and began to pray in his Ashram in Panchavati. Pleased with his prayers Lord Rama visited the sage with Sita and Laxman. They stayed with the sage for few days. After their stay the sage took Lord Rama, Sita and Laxman to the river Rukmavati Ganga, where they bathed. From there they proceeded to the East of River Ganga where Karshaks lived in small huts. Lord Rama was pleased with Karshaks' prayers and dedication and decided to bless them. He asked Karshaks to build a village at that place. "The nearby land will be very fertile and you will prosper from the crops", he said. On Lord Rama's request a village was built and it was named Raghunandanpuri. Later on this village became known as Rampar.

Rampar is situated about eighteen miles away from Bhuj and is a part of the Mandvi District. Rampar was often visited by Shreeji

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Maharaj (Lord Shree Swaminarayan) during his lifetime. Param Mukta Sankhya Yogi Dhanbaifai lived in Rampar. The population of this village is approximately 5,000 and 80% of them are Kanbis. The rest of the population is made of Jains, Muslims, Harijans, Vanands (hair dressers by profession) and others.

The inhabitants of Rampar have taken whatever opportunities the time and events have offered quite successfully. However, in the present time of Kaliyug the droughts have become a common problem in this part of India. To progress their lives further people have migrated to other parts of the world, such as Africa, Middle East, America, Europe and other countries. However, they have not forgotten their village in India. They have continued the financial assistance to the Rampar's development. With the help from these generous donors the villages have built a number of Swaminarayan Temples, Shiv Mandir, a High School, a Kindergarten, Water Supply facilities, Gaurakshan (shelters for cows) and Community Centre.

If thy friends be of better quality than thyself, thou mayest be sure of two things; the first, they will be more careful to keep thy counsel, because they have more to lose than thou hast; the second, they will esteem thee for thyself, and not for that which thou dost possess.

- Sir W. Raleigh

Striving for perfection is the greatest stopper there is... It's your excuse to yourself for not doing anything. Instead, strive for excellence, doing your best.

- Sir Laurence Oliver

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Bharasar

MAIN ENTERANCE GATE OF BHARASHAR

Bharasar is known to be a newly built village next to Mankuva in the district of Bhuj. The village is mostly populated by Patels (Kanbis). The only industry is farming, but this too has been badly hit by the failure of rainfall. Many people have been forced to move away in search of food and decent living. Many of them have now settled in Africa and Europe.

Bharasar Mitra Sewa Mandal (UK) has made a significant contribution to the current development of Bharasar.

The village currently has Elementary and Middle Schools. With help from local as well as villagers living abroad, the Bharasarians are now benefiting from the water irrigation system, tarmac roads and many recreation facilities. The villagers, in conjunction with the neighbouring village Mankuva, have also built a home for elderly.

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The Mandal organises the Annual Diwali function during which the Cultural Programmes are held in the UK. The event is attended by most of the Bharasarians living in the UK and has always been successful and self financed. During the Diwali events raffles are sold to raise funds for local charities and charities abroad.

For some years now the Bharasarians have held various Sports Competitions including Badminton and Cricket. The Bharasar Mitra Sewa Mandal (UK) regularly participates in the sporting events in the UK organised by Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Community (UK), Kingsbury Cricket Club, Mukta Jivan Cricket Club and others.

A ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.

- William Shedd

There are only two bequest we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, and other, wings.

- Hodding Carter

Always be nice to people on the way up; because you'll meet the same people on the way down.

- Wilson Mizner

If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light. Take off all your envies, jealousies, un-forgiveness, selfishness and fear.

- Glen Clark

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Dahinsara

SHREE KUTCHI LEVA PATEL SAMAJ DAHISARA

Dahinsara village is located between Bhuj and Mandvi (21 km from Bhuj) and has a population of approx 2,500. Majority of the population is that of Kanbis (Leva Patels).

It is believed that some 200 year ago the Halai families settled near the Swaminarayan Mandir, though the main settlement was at the nearby lake. One of the earliest settlers was Mayabapa whose decendents are now known as Mayani. Kuchrabapa of Jesani family settled near the lake.

The main religion practiced in Dahinsara is Swaminarayan. The village was blessed by Nilkanth and Sahjanand Swami by their personal visits. Some five generations earlier Khimjibapa of Jesani Family and Samjibapa of Bhudia Family visited the Swaminarayan Mandir, Bhuj, where they met a holy priestess Surajbai. It is said that on the same afternoon Lord Narayan Dev had personally visited Surajbai. She had served him Rotla

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that afternoon. Lord had just left when Khimjibapa and Samjibapa arrived at Surajbai's. Lord left some food on his plate and Samjibapa had the honour of finishing it.

The plate in which the Lord ate was given to Samjibapa and to this day it has remained with the Bhudia family. A few years ago the local museum asked Bhudia family to lend the plate so that it can be exhibited for the benefits of the general public. The Bhudia family denied. The plate is a religious pride of Dahinsara's history and hopefully will be preserved by passing down from a generation to generation.

Never be bullied into silence.. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one's definition of your life; define yourself.

- Harvey Fierstein

I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be honourable, to be compassionate. It is, after all, to matter; to count, to stand for something,to have made some difference that you lived at all.

- Leo Rosten

Pain is a part of being alive, and we need to learn that. Pain does not last foreever, nor is it necessarily unbeatable, and we need to be taught that.

- Harold Kushner

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Samatra

LAKE UMARASAR AT SAMATRA

First settlement of the village was pioneered by two Varsani brothers, Veljibapa and Manjibapa in the year 1751. Pindoria, Gami, Hirani and Bhudia families gradually joined in and strengthened the village community.

Samatra is one of the twenty-four main villages of Leva Patels in Kutch, situated twelve miles west of Bhuj on the main state highway to Narayan Sarovar- Tirth Dhaam. It is located on a big hill and its surrounding slopes making it naturally attractive and unique among other villages. Its total population is around 3000 of which 1500 are Leva Patels. Coincidentally, around 1500 Samatrans also live abroad mainly in UK, East Africa and Middle East countries.

There are two new Swaminarayan Temples for men and women, four Mahadev Mandirs and two Hanuman Mandirs. There are five Chhatedis at Saat-Koshi, Bhagatni-Vadi, bus station and

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Ujani Talav which Lord Swaminarayan visited during his seven day stay in Samatra. The Lord regularly went to bathe in Ujani Talav which after extensive development programme and tree plantations has once again has become a beautiful lake and a place of pilgrimage.

A new primary school and nursery school buildings were built with the help of Samatrans living abroad. There are around 450 children in Primary School and 125 children in nursery school. The primary school hosted Kutch-District Science Exhibition in the year 1990.

A modern and big community centre was opened in 1991. Ground floor consists of an open plan dining hall for 2000 people with kitchen and storage facilities. On the first floor facilities there is a multi purpose sports and social hall complete with a huge stage, dressing rooms and overflow terrace. The front compound boasts well laid out walkways, grass lawns, flower beds and tree lined boundary provides a welcome atmosphere.

Free fodder is provided to all cows of the village and its neighbouring areas during drought periods. A special committee looks after the management of procuring, storage and distribution of fodder in the village Vathan (placed where cows belonging to the villagers gather).

Samatra was the first village of our community to provide running water to every household 24 hours a day. Water table surrounding Samatra provides good clean drinking water to neighbouring villages of Fotdi, Mankuva, Bharasar and even Sukhpar-Bhuj.

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Slowly but surely, more and more people are becoming aware of the importance of storing rain water in underground river-beds. Samatra is lucky to have Vamasar Talav which sips in all its water in three months, storing its water underground. Adjacent to it is Ujani Talav which stores water on its surface for up to three years for cattle and wild-life.

There are other Talavs, like Zoliari, Nani Talav and Thawar-vari around the village. Vaghrai check dam was built some ten years ago to serve the deprived wild life of the area. Streams from the surrounding hills are diverted into the catchments area and then straight into the wells through pipelines to bring the water table level up and thereby sustain the water supply.

This is only a beginning, and much needs doing, using these techniques for all of our villages. Godpar, Meghpar, Naranpar, Kera, Baladia and Madhapar have joined the league and taken the lead. Other villages will follow for it is their interest to improve and enrich the ecology and general environment we live in.

"Forgiveness is the economy of the heart. Forgiveness saves the expense of anger, the cost of hatred, the waste of spirits."

- Hannah More

It's important the people should know what you stand for. It's equally important that they know what you won't stand for.

- Harry H. Waldrip

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Meghpar

SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE
MEGHPAR

New Meghpar is situated about 12 km away from Bhuj on the road leading to Mandvi. The village is approx. half a mile away from the main road.

The village has a primary school, which was originally built in 1971. The school was rebuilt in 1992 with financial help from the villagers then resident in the UK. It currently has 16 classrooms and is fully equipped with modern facilities including computers.

Meghpar Town Centre houses the main bus stop, a number of shops and an old Shankar Mandir. There is a kindergarten school adjoining the Mandir, which was built in 1990. The village also has Community Centre (Samajvadi) and Crematorium (Smashanbhumi).

The original village was situated at the riverbank about half a

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mile away from its current site. The village is believed to be 500 years old. It was surrounded by a fort, which currently lies in ruin. In older days Meghpar was a leading Centre for social activities. Main meetings by the Kanbis of all 24 villages were held in Meghpar.

The Check dams have been built on the river between Old and New Meghpar. The collected water is fed back to the village soil. These dams were built by the financial help from Government and Private and Social Organisations.

The water to the households in the village is facilitated by a bore-well. The villagers are mostly farmers. However, in the last fifty years many villagers have emigrated to East Africa, Middle East, UK, Australia and USA. Even though Meghpar is one of the smallest villages inhabited by our Gnati, it has progressed well by the economic assistance from the villagers living abroad.

Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step; only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find the right road.

- Dag Hammarskjold

You gain stregth, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face.

- Elanor Roosevelt

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.

- Thomas Edison

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SMASAN OF MIRZAPAR

Mirzapar was established in 1866. At that time Kutch was ruled by Shree Khengarjie 3rd and the Prime Minister was Mirza Mia. A holy man called Ram Kund Sanyasi Bava lived in the land where Mirzapar currently stands.

The land around this area had a very rich soil on account of the nearby river, which flowed throughout the year. The Sanyasi Bava had built a garden on the land, which was frequently visited by the Prime Minister Mirza Mia and his wife.

Mirza Mia's bungalow was situated approx. half a mile away from Mirzapar gram on a vast land. However, after a few years the Prime Minister moved out of the bungalow and it remained unoccupied for a long time. Eventually the bungalow was demolished and the surrounding land was converted into a farmland. Until very recently this land was owned by Shree Ruda Lalji Aamba Gondaria.

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Once on his regular walk around the Ram Kund Sanyasi Bava's garden, the Prime Minister Mirza Mia got an idea of building a village in the surrounding land. He usually visited many people living in nearby villages and invited them to build a new village and live there. However, the people did not trust the political atmosphere at that time. Eventually, a Kanbi called Govind Bapa Hirani accepted Mirza Mia's invitation. History tells us that he gathered up some of his relatives and friends and started building the village.

There are two ways of exerting one's strenght; one is pushing down, the other is pulling up.

- Booker T. Washington

I searched through rebellion, drugs, diet, mysticism, religion, intellectualism, and much more, only to find that truth is basically simple and feels good, clear and right.

- Armando "Chick" Corea

When thinking won't cure fear, action will.

- William Clement Stone

You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result.

- Mahatma Gandhi

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Kera-Kundanpar

AT KERA AN IDOL OF 30" HEIGHT HANUMANJI TEMPLE OPENED ON 25/12/2006

Kera is in history books mainly due to Lakho Fulani, a local ruler, who in the 10th century built a fortress surrounding the village and a Shiv Mandir. The river Nagmati passes through Kera from Trivani and joins Gudjod; Beraja and ends in Mundra. Many people from surrounding villages look upon Kera as their central point for shoping and banking needs.

Out of 24 Kanbis villages Kera-Kundanpar was the first to build an Industrial Training Institute (ITI). Today the village has kindergarten, separate schools for boys and girls. It was also the first village to have a cricket pitch "Kapil Cricket Ground". A treasure of rare coins was found whilst levelling the ground for this cricket pitch.

Kera has four Swaminarayan temples: two for the Shreeji Bapa and two for Narayan Dev. A ladies' temple was rebuilt and its opening ceremony was performed with a magnificent Yagna in April 1997. The men's temple was built in 1989. All temples in

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Kera have been painted in traditional bright colours. The village also has a Sanatan Hindu Temple. Kundanpar has two Swaminarayan temples and a few small shops which sells basic items.

Kera-Kundanpar is a multi-cultural community where Kanbis co-exist with Khojas, Lohanas, Suthars, (carpenters) Darjis (tailors), Dhobis (launders) Kumbhars, Gowal/Rabaris, Lohars, Ajuns, Brahmins, Jadejas, Harijans, Vagharis, Kholis and Muslims.

The Muslim community, which are predominately Khojas, has two mosques (Masjeeds): Gula Malisa and Jaminsa. In the past two Melas were held in the village: Gula Malisa was held in Chaitra month (March/April) and Sitlamat was held on Gangaji Kapilasram. After the independence of India, most of the Khoja community emigrated to Bombay, East Africa, Europe and Pakistan and consequently these Melas stopped.

The main post office and sorting office of the district was in Kera in old days. However, after the independence the Gaam Panchayat (local council) and the electrical board along with two banks were established in the village.

Originally, the bus transport service was established by the Raj Roha of Kutch (Ruler of Kutch). After independence, State of Gujarat took over the control. Today there are three bus stops: one on Gudjod-Mundra Road, second is the main Kera Bus station in the middle of village and third near the Kera High school. From the main Bazaar other means of transport can be found: Rikshaws, Taxis, Tractors, Lorries, Tempos and cars.

After independence of India, many Kanbis emigrated to Bombay, East Africa and Europe for better jobs and good

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living. Despite their settlement abroad they have not forgotten their home village Kera-Kundanpar and their generousity have supported a continued growth of Kera-Kundanpar. They have gradually started to take over the day to day running of the Kera High school from Khojas and have expanded other establsiments. It was the Kanbis's donations in 1973 that made the establishment of Industrial Training Institute (ITI) possible. They formed a management committee known as the Shree Kera-Kundanpar Leva Patel Shikshan Trust.

In 1993 the Kanbis also raised funds to build a crematorium. In 1997 a new well was build to meet the increased demand for water.

Kera is also proud of two best poets in Gujarat: Chiman and Kharim Nanjiani, who were born in Kera. Apparently, Kera is the only village in Kutch to be inhabited by Bats. They have been there for centuries and are alive and kicking today!

AN ANCIENT FORT OF H. H. LAKHA PHULANI

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Bharapar-Sujapar

SUJAPAR VILLAGE

Some one hundred and seventy years ago, on a Maha sood Pancham, then ruler of the Kutch, Maharaj Shree Khengarji Saheeb, allocated village-sized land to our people on the west of Bharapar village. The main population of Bharapar was of Khojas & Mamans whose main vocation was farming and commerce.

Our people built simple houses for their own occupancy. A few years later, Khengarji Saheeb's aunty (his father's sister) Sujaba officially donated this land to the people already settled in the village. In appreciation of this donation the villagers named the village Sujapar, which was officially opened in 1886 by the Khengarji Saheeb.

Some thirty years later, some of our people began to move from Baldia, Naranpar, Meghpar, Dahinsara, Rampar, Mankuva and Sukhpar (south) to this village in search for better

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jobs and life. Initially they lived in Jogani and Hananna Falias. All these people mingled amongst themselves as sugar melts in a glass of the milk.

In the beginning our people worked as farm labours in the village. But slowly they started their own farming from the borrowed land. Other occupants of Surajapar, at the time, were Rabari (shepherd). The Rabaris looked after the cattles whilst our people did farming. As the time passed the farming became more and more difficult because of the dry rainy seasons. Some of our people had no choice but to emigrate once more in search for bread and butter. Their first journey to overseas began here. They migrated to Africa where they worked hard in mines and building industry. However, other people continued to work in the village and began expanding the agricultural land in and nearby areas.

East Africa at the time was part of the British Raj. To expand their empire British Ruler started offering British Citizenship to all immigrants in Africa. Many of our people took advantage of this offer. Eventually, in 1963, the villagers used the British Citizenship to migrate to UK. Before this migration there were approx 400 Sujaparians living in East Africa.

Presently there are some 700 Sujaparians who reside in Europe and Australia.

The current population of the Sujapar is approximately 2000 of which 75% are of our community and the rest Rabaris and Mahajans.

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Between 1886 and 1999 Bharapar and Sujapar had a united Panchayat, but on 18 January 2000 the united Panchayat was dissolved and both villages elected their own Panchayats.

Today, Sujapar boasts two Swaminarayan, one Shiv and one Hanuman Mandirs. It also has a Gau Rakshan Trust, a girls school, a kindergarten and most of the households has running water and electricity supplies.

All Sujaparians are proud of having a social organisation whose co-operation and team spirit have achieved so much success in developing the village.

Take care of your health; you have no right to neglect it, and thus become a burden to yourself, and perhaps to others. Let your food be simple; never eat too much; take exercise enough; be systematic in all things; if unwell, starve yourself till you are well again, and you may throw care to the winds, and physic to the dogs.

- W. Hall

When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.

- Helen Keller

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Baladia

CHHATRI OF ABAJIBAPA AT BALADIA

Gaam Baladia is situated on Bhuj-Mundra Road some 19 kilometres away from Bhuj. The current Baladia gaam has been developed by the co-operation of the villagers living locally and abroad. Some kind of events is continuously held in the gaam by different organisations.

As you enter the gaam you can not escape noticing the Shree Swaminarayan Gangaji. On the left of the Gangaji is Shree Badeswar Mahadev Temple. The village Baladia has been named after this temple. It is said that many decades ago this area was a farming land owned by Patels (our people) living in the village. A Patel farmer was ploughing his field when his plough (Hal) hit a stone. After investigation the farmer realised that he has hit a Shivling and that Shivling was bleeding by the impact of the plough.

Immediately a temple was built to house the Shivling which is

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currently known as Shree Badeshwar Mahadev. The sign of the impact of the plough is still visible on the Shivling. The temple is high on a small hill. One can see the whole Baladia gaam from the compound of the temple, especially three towers which are parts of a Shree Swaminarayan temple situated in the Uplo Vas (higher land) another one in Nichlo Vas (lower land) and Shree Abji Bhapas' Chhatedi on the right hand side of the village. This Chhatedi and the nearby Hanumanji temple are well known landmarks of Baladia.

It is said that Lord Shree Swaminarayan often visited this gaam. The Hanumanji's temple adjacent to the Chhatedi is regarded the most sacred place and always visited by the pilgrims from all over the State of Gujarat.

An organisation in charge of the above temple also runs a Boarding School where many students from the village and the nearby villages come to study and progress in spiritual knowledge.

Nearby, a beautiful garden has been built and many villagers come strolling in the garden every evening. Thus, in addition to being a holy place, this part of the village is also popular for recreation. There is also an ancient Ashapura Mataji's Temple in the vicinity.

Moving further on the right of the main road there stands a big building amongst the colourful scenery. This building is known as Shree Karsan Gopal Jesani Hospital. The hospital offers all kinds of medical facilities at a very reasonable price. This hospital has become a good example of the people's eagerness and commitment to serve the community.

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The village has many social and cultural organisations, but it also has many religious places and temples such as Badeshwar Mahadev Mandir, Ashapura Mataji Mandir, Hanumanji's Mandir, Sanatan Mandir, Ganesh Mandir, and Ram Mandir as well as seven large Swaminarayan Mandirs.

In social sectors the village boasts three big and beautiful social centres – Samaj Vadi with a large auditorium hall in Uplo Vas (which is governed by Shree Baladia Leva Patel Gnati), a 'Shanti Baag' in Nichlo Vas (which is governed by Shree Swaminarayan Mandir) and the 'Bapavadi' (which is governed by Swaminarayan Sajivan Mandal). All these three social centres are used for weddings, religious functions and other social gatherings.

In Education Sector, Shree Baladia Leva Patel Education Committee Trust runs a Girls' and a Boys' School which offer good education to all young children regardless of Gnati or faiths. This Trust also manages a Kindergarten and a Sewing School.

Water is a basic need of mankind. Shree Baladia Vikas Committee provides water to the whole Gaam 24/7 (24/7 is used to indicate 24 hours a day). The Committee is also responsible for Street-lights etc.

The rain is less frequent in this part of India and the wells are drying. Often wells are dug very deep in the ground to find the water. To counteract this problem Shree Baladia Jada Sankat Nivaran Committee runs, with the assistance from the villagers living abroad, projects of storing the rain water in big check-dams. There are four such dams in the vicinity of the village.

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This water also provides drinking water to the local wildlife and domesticated animals en route to their daily grazing.

Cows are regarded as holy animals in the Hindu religion and they are worshipped. Protection of Cows is utmost importance to all the Hindus.

Shree Baladia Gau Raksan Trust runs an ideal Gau-Shala in the village which provides regular grazing, water and veterinary medical facilities.

In sports sector, the villagers are not lagging behind. Shree Sahjanand Sports Club is active in encouraging sporting activities to the youngsters of the village. The village has a large Cricket and Volleyball grounds. In addition to the Sports Club it also has facilities to hold indoor games. The Club also organises Cultural Entertainments, Coach Tours and Annual Diwali Programmes, as well as Blood Group Camps. The village also has a library which is managed by the Sports Club. A library has also been built in the flower garden, surrounding the village Crematorium.

In this manner the village is expanding on a regular basis. Currently it has a population of approx. 5000. More or less the same numbers of the villagers are living abroad. Despite living thousands of miles away, the villagers have not forgotten their motherland. Their contributions for the development of the Baladia village have been commendable.

In Nairobi, Shree Baladia Leva Patel Gnati-Nairobi plays an active part in helping the development of Baladia as well as the towns inhabited by them in Nairobi.

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For the last twenty five years the Shree Baladia Leva Patel Sarvodaya (UK) has organised many events to maintain the close relationships with the fellow villagers and at the same time raising funds for the various charitable causes. It also organises the Social and Cultural programmes to encourage the youngsters in developing their cultural and traditional heritage. This organisation also holds Annual Diwali Gathering, Coach Trips to the interesting places in the Europe/World as well as fun fairs, with a view to prosper the brotherhood amongst Baladians.

A Booklet called 'Baladia Samachar' is also published on a monthly basis which details the various achievements of Baladians as well as news from back home.

Thus with the help and co-operation from the villagers living locally and overseas, Baladia has become one of the ideal villages in Kutch district.

By Vijay Khimji Patel (UK)

The first wealth is health. Sickness is poorspirited, and cannot serve any one; it must husabands its recourses to live. But health answer its own ends, and has to spare' runs over, and inundates the neighbourhoods and creeks of other men's necessities

- Emerson

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Naranpar

A TEMPLE OF NEELKANTH MAHADEV & LAKE ON BHUJ - MANDVI HIGH WAY RUN BY NARANPAR VILLAGE

The original name for this gaam is Naranpar Keravari. Although it is nearer to the Bhuj, it was under the control of rulers of Kera and this is why the name Naranpar Keravari. It is said that the Naranpar gaam was established approx 500 years ago.

From the existence of the old shree Mahadev Temple and old remains it is believed that the gaam was established approx five hundred years ago. The river running nearby was known as Naran Nadee and village was named after the river. Even now shree Mahadev Temple is visited by many people, especially during the month of Shravan.

There are two Mahadev temples in the village. Both are believed

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to have been in existence over five hundred years.

Lord Sahjanand Swami often frequented both the temples and indeed performed daily services in both the temples for a while. Even today the Lord Sahajanand's engraved footprints are in fact visible.

Both upper and lower vas each has a Swaminarayan Temples for gents and ladies. Both parts of the village have crematoriums which are well known amongst the villagers. The village also has a preliminary school and Girls' High School. Both areas of the village are managed by two separate Panchayats and both the Panchayats are working together to provide villagers with Water and Sewerage facilities.

Naranpar Village is mostly populated by Leva Patel Kanbi and the main business is farming. The village also has an engineering workshop, which make Bull Dozers. Engineering industry is developing fast in the village. The village services many engineering rental services to the nearby village such as Kera, Baladia, Meghpar and Godpar.

The population of the village is approximately 12,000, of which some 8,000 Leva Patel Kanbi and the other 4,000 of mixed caste. Around 1,000 villagers have settled in London, UK, whose financial assistance has made it possible to hold various Eye and Dental Camps.

There are four dams built on the nearby river. Two are situated on the Bhuj-Mandvi Road.

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Vadasar

Vadasar is one of the oldest and the smallest village amongst the twenty four villages occupied by Kutchi Leva Patels. It is situated approximately 30 kilometres away to the west of Bhuj.

Because Vadasar is in the middle of urban wild land, the public transport is very poor. The nearest village is Rampar-Vekra which is 5 kilometre away. Vadasar is closely connected with Rampar-Vekra.

In the east of the village runs a river called Rukmavati. The village is surrounded by the arid farming land.

The village is built in 1 to 1.5 square kilometres. The buildings and roads are old fashioned. The streets are narrow and single lane, although the new buildings and roads are being developed in the modern designs.

Presently 75% of the population of the village is represented by Leva Patel Gnati, 15% are Sangaar and 10% Muslim, Harijans and Mahajans. Vadasar is believed to be five hundred years old. Initially the village was inhabited by Durham followed by Sangaar. Our people came to live from other places in Gujarat state and most of these people have Vekaria surname.

The elders of these Vekaria families were leaders of the village. In early days the village had close economic ties with Mankuva. The Darbaries (Courtiers) of Mankuva used to come to Vadasar to collect taxes on behalf of the local Raj.

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These days the village has a Panchayat which is mainly represented by our people including women. The village has a primary school which is often visited by leader of the village to prompt education amongst the youngsters.

The school often holds cultural programmes such as Natak and Raas Garba. It also has sports activities & competitions. Vadasar has received a development grant from the local government to lay slabs on the village roads. Because of the slabs the roads appear to be clean & tidy.

In addition, the village enjoys other amenities thanks to the financial assistance from villagers living abroad.

In religious sector both faiths such as Swaminarayan & Sanatan have representative temples in Vadasar, as mentioned above, it has one of the oldest Mahadev Mandir as well as Guneshwar Mahadev Mandir about four kilo meters away east of the village. This temple is very popular during the month of Shravan.

Seldom shall we see in cities, courts, and rich families, where men live plentifully, and eat and drink freely, that perfect health and athletic soundless and vigour of constitution which are commonly seen in the county, where nature is the cook, and necessity the caterer, and where they have no other doctor but sun and fresh air.

- South

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Sukhpar - Bhuj

MAIN GATE OF SHUKHAPAR

Sukhpar village is about five miles from the city of Bhuj in state of Gujarat, District Kutch.

The name of the village was given by Lord Shree Swaminarayan. He visited this gaam on many occassions. One of the places where Lord Shree Swaminarayan paid most visits is known as Kotta Waadi. Here we find the holy Lotus feet Shrine of Lord Shree Swaminarayan.

When the population of the village increased, the ruler of Bhuj City, Shree Madansinhji gave permission to build houses on the other side of the road. This is what we call Navo-vaas, which is named Madanpar after Shree Mandansinhji.

The total population of Sukhpar is approximately 18,000. At the beginning of the century, many of our elders took the cour-

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age and travelled to East Africa by boat in heavy seas. Many of them lost their lives, but still the people went out there in order to earn their living. Initially they went there alone, and then called their families. They played a very important part in the development of the East African economy. Many of our younger generation even ventured into Arabian Gulf countries of U.A.E and Dubai. After the Independence of Kenya, many of our people settled in U.K. In 1960, Shree Sukhpar Seva Mandal (U.K) was formed. People from abroad have played a prominent part in the development of our village in India.

There are big temples of Lord Shree Swaminarayan for males and females in both sides of the village. We also find several temples of Shree Hanumanji and Lord Shiva in different parts of the village. There are boys and girls primary schools in Sukhpar and Madanpar. Shree Swaminarayan Temples provide grass fodder for cows in the village and also have a special area for providing water. There is also a maternity home where modern facilities are provided. The modern facilities of telephone, post office and banks serve the population of the village. The village has underground drainage system which is the first of its kind in Kutchi villages. The streets of our village are really clean and tidy. Sukparian are always thankful to their Sar-Panch on this valuable project.

The village also has offices of Sar-Panch, children's nursery and playing field. Apart from street lighting, it has electricity and water supply in all the homes. Highway number 8 runs through the village, this leads to Narayan Sarovar. Sukhpar village has regular bus services to various parts of Kutch and also a train station. It is surrounded by beautiful landscapes and picnic areas like Mochirai, Kalyanpur, Ratia, Falurwoadi,

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Changlao, Vaala Kharas Talav and Satva River.

The ceremetorium is situated on the outskirts of the village near two ponds popularly know as Zadko and Zadki, both holy places. Sukhparians are traditionally farmers by trade, and provide grains for the people of the village and places afar. People have also ventured into business and many of them are contractors, traders and factory owners.

People with notable academic achievement include, first Lawyer in our whole community. Amongst the graduates are Doctors, Engineers, Chartered Accountants, Computer Engineers, Teachers and also a Pilot who has given immense support to all villagers.

Sukhparians are proud to be residents of this beautiful village.

Physical laws were strictly observed from generation to generation, there would be an end to the frightful diseases that cut life short, and of the long list of melodies that make life a torment or a trial, and that this wonderful, the body, - this "goodly temple," would gradually decay, and men would at last die as if gently falling asleep

- Mrs. Sedgwick

Forget past mistakes. Forget failure. Forget every thing except what you're going to do now and do it.

- William C. Durant

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Fotdi

PANARA SHIV TEMPLE ONE CAN SEE 3 SHIVA LINGS CAME OUT OF THE EARTH ITSELF - FOTDI

Village Fotdi is situated approximately 15 miles west of Bhuj, Kutch and 2 miles east of Samtra.

Fotdi was originally called Pethapar. According to the elders the village was established some three hundred years ago. The main inhabitants at the time were Rabaris and Harijans.

It is believed that our people ("Leva Patel Kanbis") first settled in Fotdi some two hundred fifty years ago. These families emigrated from a village called Bhuvadgaam, Kathiavad, now a part of Gujarat**.** Because they came from Bhuvadgaam they came to be known as "Bhudia".

Around 1750 AD four elders, Jeshabhai, Murabhai, Devdasbhai and Parbatbhai from the family of Meghabapa Bhudia came to settle in Fotdi. Thereafter, Sunderjibhai Hirani and Andabapa

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Hirani followed by some members from Shiani and Kehtani families came to settle in Fotdi.

Presently, population of the village is approximately 1,500; out of which 85 % are Kanbis and the balance is of Rabaris and Harijans.

As with many of other Kanbi villages in Kutch district, the farming was the main industry in Fotdi. However, the succession of draughts forced many of our people to sail across the sea to Africa. Even in the Africa the life was very hard in the beginning, but the elders persevered for the sake of their families back home in India.

Gradually, their hard work paid up and they managed to earn a decent living. Today, Fotdians can also be found in the United Kingdom, Portugal and America. There are some 500 Fotdians living in England. Despite their settlement in foreign countries, the villagers did not forget their love for their homeland in Kutch. Their financial contributions and local elders' hard work Fotdi has made a considerable progress. Despite being a small village it currently has all the basic and modern amenities, such as home to home water, electricity and telephone services.

There are two Swaminarayan Temples, one kindergarten, a crematorium, a community centre, a government funded school and a big sports ground.

Travelling is easy as the village is joined with tarmac national highway and carriageways. Fotdi is very clean and is surrounded by lakes Musra and Panara, four small water reservoirs, a big park, a Mahadev and a Hanumanji temple. A

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few kilometres away there is a Peer ni Durgah, this is a grave of a Muslim holy man. This place is well known amongst both Hindu and Muslim. Every year a grand festival takes place and thousands of people come to this holy place to pray and pay their respects.

In 1975 AD, to promote our traditional values, faith in Gods amongst the Fotdians living in England, and to assist the development of their beloved village, Fotdi Mitra Mandal was established. Since 1977 this organisation has been holding annual events/gatherings. Many Fotdians living in England have their own businesses, whilst others are in employment. Whatever their livelihood, the Fotdians are very proud of their past and are very loyal to their homeland village, Fotdi.

If the mind, that rules the body , ever so far forget itself as to trample on its slave, the slave is never generous enough to forgive the injury, but will rise and smile the oppressor.

-Longfello

The point is not to pay back kindness but to pass it on.

- Julia Alvarez

To conquer fear is the beginnig of wisdom.

- Bertrand Russel

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Kodki

Kodki is nested in a valley surrounded by the hills all the way round. Two roads have been cut through to link Kodki with Mankuva and Bhuj.

Kodki originally had little settlement of Rabaris and Maldharis (Nomadic tribes, whose main activity is cow herding). The original name was Bhavanipur, named after the Maldharis' family goddess Bhavani Maa.

As one arrives in Kodki from Mankuva Road, one is greeted by a beautiful site of Shree Kodki Gangaji, this is an ancient temple visited by Lord Shree Ramchandra, Lord Shree Krishna and Lord Datrataya. At one time the waters from Gangaji and Yamunaji used to overflow into the nearby river Khari Naadi and then into Khari Talav. Today due to lack of successive Monsoon seasons the waters have somewhat dried up. However, there is an enormous effort by the NRI Kodkians to rebuild this holy place and therefore there is a major activity of tree plantation with a view to restore the place to its previous glory.

Every Sunday one can see coach loads of tourists and picnic makers arrive from places as far as Rajkot (situated some 200 Kilometres away). There are a number of NRIs who feel very strongly about putting back the Gangaji on the road map for visitors.

Earliest arrival of Kanbis dates back to 1870 (from Dahisara). Halai and Hirani families were the earliest Kanbis to settle in

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Kodki and take up agriculture as main profession. Today the gaam is a thriving place for Kanbis, who have become extremely successful due to their entrepreneurial, agricultural skills, the art of saving for rainy day, hard work and community networking. Kanbis of Kodki today are involved in various other professions and vocations such as IT, banking, outsourcing, construction and import and export.

Regiment is better than physic.Every one should be his own physician. We ought to assist, and not to force nature. Eat with moderation what agrees with your consittution. Nothing is good for the body but what we can digest. What medicine can procure digestion ? Exercise. What will recruit strenght ? Sleep. What will alleviate incurable evils ? Patience

- Valtaire

Be who you are and say what you feel, beacuse those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind.

- Theodore Seuss Giesel

When you encounter difficulties and contradictions, do not try to break them, but bend them with gentleness and time.

- St. Francis De Sales

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Mankuva

SHREE MANKUWA MEDICAL CHERITABLE TRUST HOSPITAL

Mankuva was founded about 572 years ago, Vikram Savant 1485 (1428 AD).

It is believed that His Highness King Bhimji of Lakyari Veera gave twelve villages to his younger brother Karan Sinhji. This area stretched from Mankuva to Hangaria, and included villages of Tibo and Mota Mau. Presently Mankuva covers approx 8.24 Km along the main highway and 3Km in width. It has a multi-cultural society, and its population is about 16,000 of which 10,000 are registered on the voting register.

Over the years, the village has been a closed and developed farming community, and has enjoyed the natural resources like spring water. Many people have migrated to foreign countries for economic reasons, but these people have maintained a close relationship with the fellow villagers back in homeland. Thanks to the financial and moral supports from Mankuvans living abroad, the village has schools and hospital.

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First such hospital was opened in 1987. It still provides services like maternity, dental, cataract operations, diabetic clinics and welfare clinics for children.

In 1968 a High school was built and it meets primary, secondary and further education needs of the villagers.

As time passed, Mankuva became the centre of economic development. It developed basic amenities such as electricity and water supplies to all the households. To facilitate needs of the Mankuvans living abroad a head post-office, banks and a telephone exchange were established. Businesses like lumber yards, textiles, constructions, mechanical machinery equipment and fuel stations have flourished. The village enjoys a regular transport service.

Not only Mankuva but the surrounding villages too have benefited from the growth of the Mankuva. For its elderly people the village has a retirement home. It also has many places of worship to meet the need of a multi-cultural society.

Mankuva is no longer a village, but a progressive small town. Our young and future generation should visit Mankuva to appreciate the fruits of their parents'/grand parents' hard-work, dedication and generosity.

The art of living lies less in eliminating our troubles than in growing with them.

- Bernard Baruch

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Sukhpar - Roha

LAKE OF SHUKHPAR - ROHA

This village was first named "Satpar" (abode of truth). When and why it was renamed "Sukhpar" (abode of happiness) is not known. Accurate history without written records to verify is impossible. Information handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another is bound to vary at each stage. In the absence of written records, we can only sketch a picture with a broad brush. It is said that this village began its existence about two hundred years ago when its foundation stone was laid by two pioneers: Manabapa Nakrani and Dungarbapa Pindoria. Whence they came is also unknown to us. One thing which is absolutely certain is that they moved from outside Kutch because we do not speak the Kutchi dialect even after two hundred years. We speak Kathiawadi dialect and can therefore safely accept that our forefathers originated from Kathiawad.

The story goes that the above two elders were travelling from east to west in search for a place for settlement. At dusk they

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arrived at Vijpasar which was a prosperous place in those days, being resided by wealthy Barots, a gifted cast well renowned for its hospitality. The Barots enquired of these elders in the evening as to where they intended to go. Both elders replied that they were looking for a place where they can earn their bread and make their permanent home. The Barots suggested that they need not travel any further as they could, if they so desired, cultivate the land near Vijpasar and they also promised to obtain for them permission from the local ruler, Vesalji Darbar.

Next day one of the Barot went to the consort of the ruler Rajmata Santoba, who was an extraordinary lady taking keen interests in the well-being of her subjects. She sent for these two elders, and as a jeweller who instantly recognises the worth of the jewel, Rajmata recognised these two to be of valuable assets. She was particularily impressed by their resolve to work hard. She granted them permission to form a new village, which was named Satpar.

The foundation of a Hindu village is always laid by formal installation of an idol of Lord Hanuman. Our two pioneers duly conformed to this auspicious beginning by installing an idol of Lord Hanuman and a temple of Lord Shiva. It is a Hindu belief that Lord Hanuman keeps evil spirits out of the village and Lord Shiva destroys our evil desires. Thus began a community which went on expanding with the passage of time. Kith and kin of both these families were brought in and persuaded to settle in Sukhpar. Eventually, there came a point when the land could no longer provide sustenance for everyone. Some young men went to Mumbai (Bombay) and worked as porters and sent money back home for their families. Later on came a significant turning point when some young men braved hardships

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to go across the Indian Ocean to go to Africa. We are well aware of how our migration to East Africa began with all its ups and downs. Today nearly half of the Patidar population of Sukhpar Roha is in the UK.

Let us cast another glance at Sukpar-Roha. The suffix "Roha" is used merely to distinguish it from another Kanbi village of the same name, Sukhpar. Today, the Sukhpar-Roha has a 24/7 water supply, electricity and telephone facilities. It has an excellent transport system. The natural scenery surrounding the village is second to none. High hills shelter the village almost on all sides. The village is the trading centre of the surrounding villages and hamlets. Indeed, our pioneers could not have chosen a better place to settle in Kutch. The village now has a nursery school and a hospital. Simply investing in buildings would not be the end. We ought to ensure that we invest in our children by providing them with good and conscientious teachers. Lazy and incompetent teachers must be outsted. We are people of high intelligence and skills. We will be condemning our children to second class citizenship in India if we fail to give them proper education and training. We have already seen the results of material wealth without education.

A person who doubts himself is like a man who would enlist in the ranks of his enemies and bear arms againts himself.

- Alexandre Dumas

Failure is the condiment that gives success its flavour.

- Truman capote

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Godpar

A DEDA TREE (NUTS) AT DEDAWADI - GODPAR OVER 200 YEARS OLD TREE

Godpar is a village in the State of Gujarat, Western India.

Godpar village is located in district Kutch Bhuj to the west of Bhuj - Mandvi highway 20 kilometres from Bhuj Town. Farms and forest surround the village to the extent of 3 - 4 kilometres. Therein are small check dams and a medium size irrigation dam called Jamora, from which farmers receive irrigation water via channels to grow crops during winter and irregular rain periods. To the north east of Godpar is the forest area belonging to Meghpar, Godpar's immediate neighbouring village. Godpar is 1 kilometre off the Bhuj - Mandvi highway.

Of the total population of the village 50% are Patels (Kanbis). Harijans are 20% and the remaining 30% is made up of various other tribes in which potters, rabbaris (goat and sheep herds-

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men) and Muslims are the most. A lot of the Kanbis have migrated to African countries such as Kenya, Uganda; European countries such as Great Britain and Arabic states such as Oman, Salalah and Dubai. Although people from different tribes reside in the village intertribal disputes are minimal. All the people help each other during village improvement works. The village is devoid of inter-tribal disputes which have dire effect on the nation of India.

The village has a primary and a nursery school established by the Kutch Leva Patel Community. The community has also introduced piped water supply, play ground and recreation areas as well as street lighting for dark periods. National and other events are celebrated in the primary school. Competitive sports are played and social and cultural programmes such as raas-garba, dramas etc. are organised in which the children take part. Village elders and benefactors attend these functions. All the children taking part in the different events are awarded gifts and prizes donated by expatriates and village benefactors to encourage the children. Village elders organise visits to the school to encourage the extracurricular activities in the school. Tree planting, science exhibitions, school outings etc. are also organised. The village council has presented a television set to the school, through which the pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of various subjects transmitted by media.

If we observe the town planning of the village it looks like that the village was settled in a long time ago. The old roads are narrow with many bends, but the construction of modern type houses in new areas makes it possible to lay the new wider roads at rectangle to each other. Three arched entrances con-

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structed in the village from funds donated by benefactors are very impressive. One of these is located at the entrance to the Hindu crematorium; the second being at the entrance to the village by the primary school; the third and the newest one is located by the highway. There is a small lake in the heart of the village, which is very beneficial to the local community. Before the piped water supply it was the main source of water for the majority of the population. Trees are planted on the banks of this lake, which further improve the scenery of the village.

The village has separate temples for males and females of the Swaminarayan sect. The villagers celebrate religious festivals such as Tulsi Vivah, Holi, Diwali, and Thakarthali etc. These celebrations awaken the lethargic energies of the youth. Also they become inquisitive about social and philosophical issues. The village has youth and infants clubs. There is also a music band. The youths who participate in the band play the instruments very well. There are temples dedicated to Shiva, Hanumanji and Yaksh in the village also. Thakarthali programmes are organised in the Shiva temple from time to time and samaiyo procession takes place at the Yaksh temple and on the festival days the raas-dandias are organised there. The compound near the Yaksh temple was proving to be too small for the dances, so volunteers levelled the adjacent riverbank to enlarge the temple compound.

The main occupation of the villagers is farming but because of the shortage of arable land people of the village go to other near by villages to earn their living. A lot of the people go to foreign lands as well.

The elders and the youth of Godpar are forever keen to improve the village.

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Mandvi

VIJAY VILLASH PALACE - MANDVI

Mandvi was established by Rao Khengarji in 1585. At one time it was a very famous harbour. It connected with South Africa, Zanzibar, Arabia, Malaysia, China and Japan. Navigators of Mandvi were famous all over the world for their skills to navigate sea crafts by the position of the stars.

Two routes were open to the traveller to Kutch; a journey by sea all the way from Bombay to the ancient seaport of Mandvi or a twelve hours railway trip on the broad gauge line to Ahmedabad, then a change into the metre guage for the slow jog/trot for the other twelve hours through Kathiawad and then embark a launch/ferry either at Bedi in Nawa Nagar state or at Navlakhi in Morvi state. The sea route is no longer in use for passenger travel.

Mandvi is situated 60 Km, from Bhuj and is situated south of Bhuj on the sea shore. It is famous for ship building and for its

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beach which is very clean with blue water. A few miles away from Mandvi there is summer palace called Vijay Villas build in Rajesthan style for Maharao Vijayraiji in 1929.

It is not known when Kanbis first inhabitated this town. Our people mostly live in their farmhouses although recently many have moved to the suburb area of the main town. Mandvi has a large Swaminarayan temple.

Near Mandvi, about 3 miles is Ravalpir with its very quiet beach. Some six miles from Mandvi is the Ashapuramata temple with a beach of soft sand and blue water.

One of the finest beaches in Gujarat is at Mandvi, a historic port town of the Maharao of Kutch. The port of Mandvi was an important sea trade post between the near east and the far east, and brought considerable prosperity to the royal family of Kutch. The sailors of Mandvi were known to be adventurous and it is said even Vasco Do Gama used a sailor from Mandvi to navigate to Zanzibar. As most of the top ports of India were controlled by Europeans, specially the Portugese, even the Mughals held the Maharaos of Kutch in high esteem, as they needed the port of Mandvi for exports, imports and for pilgrimages to Mecca. Mandvi town was therefore as important to the Maharaos as their capital city of Bhuj, and they endowed it with some splendid palaces and buildings.

The famous Aina mahal of Mandvi, built in the mid-18th century by Ram Singh, who had been ship wrecked in Europe, learnt the arts of foundry, glass blowing, stone

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carving etc in the Dutch and Venetian tradition, and was patronised by the Maharao Lakhpat Sinhji of Kutch, is no longer as grand as the same sort of extravangaza they created in Bhuj, having been converted into a college for girls, but still has some interesting sculpture of Dutch sailors and dancing girls. Instead, you must see the much more recent Vijay vilas palace, erected in the 1940s, with splendid architectural features- umbrella domes and cupolas of the Rajasthani and Bengali styles consort with Gothic arches and Baroque features! The impressive palace is now open to visitors who can see the paintings and trophies inside, and enjoy views of the huge grounds to the sea, from the terrace.

Action without study is fatal. Study without action is futile

- Mary Ritter Beard

Experience is not what happens to a man. It is what a man does with what happens to him.

- Aldous Huxley

Some people are always grumbling because roses have throns. I am thankful that throns have roses.

- Jean-BaptisteAlphonse Karr

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SKLP World - wide Community

Animals migrate and so do birds. They migrate mainly in search of food and suitable climate. Man being part of the nature behaves somewhat similarly. There is a certain category of people like gypsies who are always on the move. They prefer the freedom of place and time, but the political boundaries of the present day is a big hurdle to them. Our community is not like gypsies but history shows that we have travelled far and wide in a short span of time in search of livelihood.

From Leuva district in Gujeranvala- Punjab to Adalaj near Ahemdabad and Halar in Kathiawar we travelled to Kutch around 1576 AD (1632 VS (Vikram Savant)). As our roots are in Leuv we were referred to as Leuva or Leva. Kadwa Patels are from neighbouring Karad district hence Karadwa or Kadwa. Our occupation was mainly farming all along therefore originally referred to as Kurmi-Kshatriya. In Sanskrit "Bhuh Ashya asti Iti Kurmi" means whoever has the land is Kurmi. Over a period of time the word Kurmi derogated into Kunbi and later into Kanbi. During the period in Gujarat the word Patidar (holder of land) came into use which derived from the word Panti – Pati - a piece of land. Head of the village was called Patel and his descendent also came to be known as Patels.

Around 1930 AD adverse climatic conditions and shortage of land forced us to leave the shores of Mandvi – Kutch and embark on an unknown voyage to Africa the Dark Continent.

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Mombasa – Dar-Es-Salam

On landing in Mombasa Old Port or Dar-es-salam port, things were not as easy and promising as one would expect, after three months of tiring and treacherous sea voyage on a supply of rationed food and water. There were real hardships of finding a suitable accommodation and a job. They organised themselves in small groups to share accommodation. Limited resources and they even shared the jobs. Their day would begin at 3.00 am and they would take turns to do the group's cooking and household duties. During the weekends, they would meet and organise Kathas, Bhajans and Kirtans to keep up the morale and draw inspiration from their religion. Alcohol, tobacco and gambling were strictly prohibited at their gatherings. Their gatherings become the foundation stones of our present day Samaj.

A need was felt for a community centre where people would meet and organise the social activities. The leading members of the community with vision and wisdom with a solid support from the community at large, set up an organisation called Shree Cutchi Leva Patel Samaj, Mombasa on 16th January 1946 under the able leadership of Late Shree Naranbhai Gopal of Sukhpar-Roha. Donations in cash poured in and in just under three years a beautiful community centre was ready and opened for public (15th August 1949).

Through the passage of time, Mombasa Samaj building went through a major reconstruction and modernisation programme and now Mombasa community is proud to have a fully equipped community centre with full facilities. Next to our

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Samaj complex is our magnificent Kutch Satsang Swaminarayan Temple where coach loads of tourists come to visit everyday. In a beautiful location in Nyali a modern Swaminarayan Academy has been built and is now one of the best in Mombasa. Sahjanand Apartments a modern community housing scheme on Nyali Sea front was pioneered by our Samaj. These developments have given tremendous boost to the morale of the communities elsewhere as well.

Nairobi

Nairobi the Capital of Kenya was developing fast and it was to be linked by railways to Mombasa. Our community members took up the challenge and played a very important role in building the railways. Nairobi, the City in the Sun, well known for its moderate climate and beautiful setting was a natural choice for settlement. Once settled, Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj, Nairobi was formerely set up in 1953. In just under a year the Samaj building was ready and opened for Public use on 26th December 1954. Since then Nairobi Samaj has remained as a forefront in carrying out its social, welfare and educational activities. Moreover, along with Mombasa Samaj, it played a leading role in establishing our Samaj back home in Bhuj first, and then in the UK. In 1991, Nairobi Samaj embarked on the most ambitious project ever undertaken by any community in East Africa.

The Year of 2003 is an important year for the Kutchi Leva Patel Community residing in Nairobi. The Community people have contributed 50 good years to preserve and enhance its rich cultural values which they brought with them to this country, more than a century ago.

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The First important and note worthy part played by Kutchi Leva Patels was in rendering services with other Asian Communities, in the construction of railway tracks between Mombasa and Nairobi. This was a great service done by them to this country and its development. It is really a matter of great pride and Honour for them. During this course many sacrificed their lives, being devoured to death by the lions, and other wild animals. The railway line gave freedom to trade and commuting between Mombasa and Nairobi.

Remembering our pioneers of those past years to day is the only and the best homage and respects that we could possibly give to them from the depth of our hearts. What we are to day are the fruits of sacrifices our fathers and forefathers gave for us. To forget them today would amount to arrogance and stupidity. Our people were not only very hard working but also possessed very strong motivation and spirit of self-realization, not to beg or ask for any assistance for any needs. It was this very strong conviction that our Kutchi Leva Patel Community to-day are established in this country as top notch Building & Civil Engineering, Plumbing, Electrical and other general contractors. Today our people have laid firm feet, in industries of various types, Hardware Merchants, Clothes and Textile Merchants, professionals like Architects, Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, Lawyers, Accountants, doctors and even air pilots.

Our people from very early days had realized that lack of education was the major cause of our poverty in India and initial lack of opportunity in Kenya. Now that we have been able to achieve all these and also opened doors and created an able environment for further progress to even greater heights,

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it must be noted by one and all that all these could not have achieved, if we all along had not stood together, shoulder to shoulder. Our forefathers knew this better. They stayed and stood united at least on community level. Time and time again we had faced hurdles and obstacles from outside forces who had relentlessly worked to dis-unite us and throw our community into disintegration.

But we had resisted and brushed away these designs with compassion cool headedness and in a most silent manner. We had concentrated and worked all along for our unity and advancement. All these could not have been achieved without us coming into one fold i.e. establishment of Shree Cutchi Leva Patel Samaj. The movement of the establishment of Shree Cutchi Leva Patel Samaj had started as early as 1946.

It was found absolutely necessary to have a place for holding meetings, performing cultural and social functions and creating environment for advancement of our youth's activities. Inspite of very low income, long working hours and very few financially well to do Community members, a plot of land was purchased along Ronald Ngala Street (then known as Duke Street). The zeal, unity and mindful of our Community's welfare and upbringing of our community members was very high and thus within a very short time necessary construction plans were made ready.

Mr. Laljibhai Naran Vadgama an architect gave his valuable input in this regard. On 23rd March 1953 (Chaitar Sud 9-Ramnavmi) the foundation stone laying ceremony was performed by late Nanjibhai Harji Varsani of Manukwa Village under the Chairmanship of late Shri Devshi Dhanji Vekaria. On this auspicious occasion late Shri Devshi Dhanji Vekaria and the

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Chairman of Shree Cutchi Leva Patel Samaj, Mombasa, Mr. Karsan Premji Gangji addressed our Community members and impressed upon them to maintain unity at all times. The construction work of our Samaj building started in full swing. Our people then contributed most generously. Our working class people donated their one-month's salaries. Even donations ranging from Shs. 5/- to Shs. 10/- and over poured into the Samaj's purse. It must be mentioned here that these sums of Shs. 5/- and Shs. 10/- at that time were by no means small amounts considering that most of our people then were earning daily wages of Shs. 2/- and Shs. 3/-.

The construction of Samaj building was completed under the supervision of Building Committee through the said committee's chairman Shri Mavji Ruda Varsani. Then came the big day for one and all Kutchi Leva Patels' of Nairobi. The opening ceremony of our three storied Samaj Building was performed on 26th December 1954. At this memorable occasion our community brothers and sisters from Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru, rest of Kenya and other parts of East Africa came to grace this very important function.

During the earthquake disaster in 1956 our people in Kutch and other humans suffered considerable losses and injuries. Our Samaj on such period of grief and sorrow stood up to the occasion and collected funds in cash and clothes and same were sent over to India.

Slowly our community members became more enlightened and started taking more and more interest in the community welfare projects and functions. Our community youths with the concurrence and the good wishes of our elders organised arts

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and crafts exhibitions, Diwali and New Year functions, painting exhibitions etc. Our Swayamsevak Dal also continued to provide a very good service to all the functions of our Samaj and various other Socials and Government organized functions.

This is also an opportune moment to take note and thank our community members' who for a couple of days rendered exemplary services in helping to remove the victims of the bomb blast from the debris. Readers, reading this article may halt for a moment and pray to almighty God for the souls of those innocent people who lost their lives, for those who received permanent injuries.

The tears from our community members' eyes had hardly dried, when once again our community members in India, Kenya and the rest of the world were struck in pain, grief and sorrow. A very heavy earthquake took place in Kutch, India on 26th January 2001, the epicentre being just about 27 kilometres from Bhuj. In this earthquake very many properties in Bhuj and almost all the villages of Kutch were totally destroyed and or damaged beyond repairs. Many lives (several thousands) were lost and many people received multiple injuries, mostly of a permanent nature. Many children were orphaned. The impact of this earthquake had taken the toll of whole of Saurashtra and substantial portion of areas surrounding Ahmedabad. A number of multi-story buildings in Ahmedabad collapsed to the ground.

Our community members in Nairobi lost their several relatives, friends and kins. At this juncture our people once again rose to the occasion and people from all the villages of Cutchi Leva Patel Community resident in Nairobi donated money most

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generously to assist the injured ones and those who lost their properties and household effects.

Our Samaj also pledged to donate a big amount of money for this worthy cause. Monies donated by individual community members were sent to our Bhuj Samaj and it has already been put to proper and rightful use. On this occasion the students of our Samaj School did not sit back at this hour of need. They came out openly and sacrificed their small pocket moneys they got from their parents for their recess breaks, obtained funds from parents and friends and well wishers and collected approximately Shs.1,700,000/-, a portion of which was donated to the Indian Prime Minister's Earthquake Relief Fund and rest was forwarded by the School Board to Bhuj Samaj to be used for the repairs of schools damaged in the earthquake. You the students of Samaj deserve special thanks and a pat too.

No one wants to know how much you have earned.
All they want to know is how did you earn and how and where did you spend.

Eldoret, Thika, Nakuru, Kisumu and Kampala

There is a proverb in Gujarati "Wherever there is a single Gujarati, he sets up his own little Gujarat". The community members chose to settle down in places wherever there was an opportunity to earn a livelihood, Eldoret, Thika, Voi, Nanyuki, Nakuru and Kisumu in Kenya and Kamplala, Entebbe in Uganda and Dar-Es-Salam, Moshi, Arusha in Tanzania were the other main towns of settlement in East Africa

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of which Eldoret community was big enough to organise themselves as a Samaj.

The Eldoret is a Masai word meaning "Cattle Land". The first Asian to settle in this town, just 100 miles from the Ugandan border was in 1918. It grew as a border trading town and with rich farmlands and natural resources it slowly developed into the fourth biggest town in Kenya.

Although our community in Eldoret is small, it is well organised and have built up very good relations with other Hindu Communities. Not only has its regular activities, but also actively participated in major event elsewhere, including UK and Kutch.

Looking Back to Bhuj

Although many of our community members were by now settled in East Africa, they used to make regular trips to their villages in Kutch. They built holiday/retirement homes in their villages. They built schools, clinics, hospitals, water supply, roads and even street lighting which in fact are responsibilities of the local government. Gujarat Government has always treated Kutch province unfairly and this trend must now be reversed.

To co-ordinate our activities in Kutch there was a need for place of our own in Bhuj from where the community can operate. The first executive committee of Bhuj Samaj was elected on 14th March 1965 at a General Meeting held at Shree Sarasvati Vidhyalay School, Madhapar. The foundation stone for a Samaj building in Bhuj was laid on 12th May 1968. In just years, the magnificent building was completed and the opening ceremony performed on the 23rd May 1970. Ever since then Bhuj Samaj

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has played a pivotal role in organising the community welfare in Social and educational fileds. Today Bhuj Samaj has girls' schools and hostel which is most sought after school in the whole of province.

East Africa to UK

During our settlement in Kenya, a need was felt for higher education. There was a time when parents feared to send their young boys and girls abroad, thinking that they might adopt a different way of life and culture and lose them forever. Nevertheless, energetic and enterprising youths began going back to India to join colleges in Bombay, Baroda, Delhi, Poona, Banglore and others. Some were bold enough to travel to UK for further education. Mr Naranbhai Jadva Vekaria was the first student from our community who came to UK in 1947, the year when India became independent. Isn't that a very symbolic co-incident?

Britain's harsh climate and hectic and monotonous lifestyle was unable to attract people for settlement for a long time. It was only from 1960 onwards that a few enterprising families began to arrive in UK for settlement. Mr Govind Hirji Kerai of Vadasar settled in Walsall followed by Mr Naranbhai Karsan Bhavan of Baldia, Mr Valjibhai Halaria of Kera, Mr Shivjibhai Amba Kerai of Mandvi, Mr Laljibhai Velji Rabadia of Vadasar, Mr Mavjibhai Karsan Jesani of Baladia, Mr Laxmanbhai Ramji Vekaria of Baldia, Mr Veljibhai Nanji Kerai of Vadasar, Mr Devjibhai Ramji Patel of Mirjapar, Mr Kanjibhai Mavji Pindoria of Baladia were the first of few to settle in UK.

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After Kenya became independent in 1963, political situation began to change in East Africa and it was at this time that people seriously considered UK for settlement. People of Vadasar, Mandvi, Mirjapar, Godpar, Samtra, Madhapar, Bharasar and Surajpar were in the leading flow.

In those days because of language difficulties, work, accommodation, non-availability of Indian food were the main hardships that faced these people. Yet undeterred, the experience they had gained and the deep faith in their religion that they had cultivated during their years in East Africa, held them together in a completely diferent culture and environment. They were strict vegetarians. Alcohol and tobacco were not allowed at social and religious gatherings. The philosophy of a simple lifestyle helped the community to strive, and members, with each other's help and family support were soon in a position to afford mortgages to buy their own houses and other properties.

As members got settled down with their families, they felt the need to organise their social and religious activities at community level. A first meeting of enthusiasts was held in 1965 Chalkfarm, North London, an idea of forming a community organisation in the UK was put forward. Three years after, Shree Cutch Social and Cultural Society was established which organised cultural activities such as Navaratri, dance, drama and music. In the field of sport Wembley Volleyball Club played a leading role in organising youth to participate in games like Voleyball and Badminton.

As a result of strong conviction and determined efforts of the enthusiasts, a community based organisation was set up on 4th

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February 1972. It was to be called Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community (UK). Its first president was Shree Kurjibhai Karsan Varsani of Bharasar. Slowly but surely community activities began to take shape. A few years later Shree Kutch Leva Patel Community, Blackburn and Shree Cutchi Leva Patel Samaj, Cardiff was set up.

Community Centre (West Hendon)

In London a need was felt to have a community centre for the Samaj. At one of the meetings, Late Shree Harjibhai Ladha Varsani (popularly known as Bapu) of Samatra from Mombasa was present and pledged Kenya Shilling 10,000 as his personal donation for the building fund and invited for a visit to Kenya for the Samaj, building project fund. That was the turning point in the history of our community in UK. Shree K.M. Varsani of Samatra, then president visited Kenya and with Bapu's guidance and help and generosity of the community members in Kenya raised sufficient funds to buy an old building for £33,000 in West Hendon. The UK community will forever be grateful for the marvellous gesture of our community in Kenya.

With the help of a dedicated team of members who worked voluntarily late nights in freezing cold conditions, the derelict building was completely modernished with a new roof, double glazed windows and kitchen facilities. The hall was officially opened to the public by His Worshipful the Mayor of Barnet on 6th September 1980. Although the hall is very small in size, it has proved itself as a strong base for organising and co-ordinating the activities of twenty five small sister organisations which are the pillars of the community and are doing a splendid job of working at grass root levels which no single organisation can do on its own.

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UK Samaj organised major annual events like ten day Navaratri festival and Diwali. It has also set up a very successful Saturday School to teach Gujarati, Maths, Physics and English. Annual sports and cultural festival grew into a major community event where more than twelve thousands people participated with their family and friends. It is a symbol of unity and brotherhood and source of inspiration to our new generation where the tradition of alcohol-free festival is still vigorously maintained. The credit for this achievement must go to the entire community which has resisted this social evil in disguise with a sheer determination. However, it is a sad note that some weddings, which is supposed to be a religious ceremony, alcohol is served in the belief that it projects the image of modernism. But how true is this belief? The government agencies, sociologists, educationists and medical experts have produced piles of evidence to prove that alcohol, tobacco and drugs have done tremendous damage to the fabric of the society and it is the root cause of all the other problems. We humbly request the members to discourage alcohol at all levels.

Cardiff

Cardiff, the Capital of Wales, was one of the earlier settlements of our community in UK. In earlier years it organised its activities in schools and church hall. As the community grew, an old building was purchased at the cost of £15,000. With the untiring efforts of a few dedicated enthusiasts who travelled to Bristol, Bolton, Oldham, Blackburn and London on weekends and visited members from house to house to collect whatever contributions they could receive, sufficient funds were raised to refurbish the old building. With the moral support of SKLP

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Community UK, our community members in Cardiff joined hands and transformed the old building into a modern multipurpose community centre, which was opened to public on 11th November 1984.

East London, Bolton

To get to the roots of the community in East London and Bolton, SKLP Community, East London and Bolton, came to existence and started organising their activities at community levels soon a new centre for Bolton Samaj was opened on 28th August 1992.

The Religion - Temples

Along with social, cultural and sports activities of the Samaj, religious groups were doing a marvellous job of setting up temples in different parts of UK. The community temples in Willesden, Golders Green, Kenton, Stanmore, East London, Woolwich, Cardiff, Bolton and Oldham served the religious needs and played a vital role in organising activities on a daily basis regularly and as being torch bearers for fundamental beliefs. Their efforts must be complimentary to each other in order to achieve the real benefits and progress for the community.

Forward Together

In December 1990, Bhuj Samaj celebrated its Silver Jubilee on a grand scale. The community members from various parts of the world participated to cultivate unity, brotherhood and international friendship. Sports teams from UK, Nairobi,

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Mombasa and Bhuj-Kutch participated in cricket, volleyball, badminton, table tennis darts and kabbadi tournaments. During this Silver Jubilee Festival there were lots of other activities including Yuvak and Mahila Samelans, Arts, Crafts and educational exhibitions and competitions.

For the entire festival, free lunch was provided for thousands of people at our Samaj Complex. In the evenings quality music and entertainment programmes were organised as the highlights of the festival. The theme of the festival was "Let's have better education for our girls". Bhuj Samaj had started Kanya Chhatralaya three years earlier on experimental basis. Our Chhatralaya girls took it as a challenge and ran a two week festival as if it was their own with clockwork efficiency. The whole event was such a success that more than two crore rupees were raised for furthering the cause of girls' education. Our own modern High School for girls was soon built and new modern residential halls were added to house more than 1000 girls. This institution now is not just a girls school and a hostel but a full fledged community Sanskar Dhaam, an institution for character building and personal development. These all-round community developments generated enthusiasm among members and gave our youths a sense of belonging, new hope and direction.

Looking Ahead

Looking back over the years, it shows that our community has made a definite progress. Now that we have settled down in UK we need to look ahead. In the rush to grab easy money, education is one very important field that has been neglected. Despite the education opportunities that are available in this

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country, we have failed to put our priorities right. We must now put the education of our children on top of the priority list.

We must impress on our children good old values of family life, self discipline and good citizenship. The most fundamental teaching of Hinduism are to learn to respect parents, teachers and elders and respect others religion and beliefs. For this very reason Hinduism is considered to be a universal religion. We must teach our children these basics rather than confuse them with strict rules and rituals. Religion is something that grows naturally from within and it must unite people and not divide. Unity in diversity is the foundation stone of Hinduism and we must uphold these time tested values to live in peace, prosperity and harmony.

In 1992 at our 20th Anniversary Festival at Copthall Stadium a call was made to the community to help acquire a site of our own, big enough to accommodate our entire community of 25,000 people by 1997, the year when we would be celebrating our 25th Anniversary in UK. Through God's grace and sheer determination of the community we acquired an 18 acre site in Northolt on 7th August 1996, and celebrated our first annual festival on 11th August 1996 at our own Sports and Community complex. It was a great occasion for the entire community, to celebrate its Special Celebrations between 26 and 28 August 2006. The 2006 August Bank Holiday Weekend was held to celebrate 25 years of SKLPC Annual Function, Navaratri, Hendon Hall, Saturday School; 21 years of of SKLPC 5 aside football tournament, Volleyball and Cricket and 10 years of Elders Group and Northolt establishment.

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Kutchi Leva Patel's Progress

The Kutch Leva Patel Samaj was established many years ago to assist and serve the Kanbi Leva Patels living in the twenty four villages scattered around the Bhuj District, in India. Thanks to the foresight of the past leaders of the community they purchased a big field in the S T Colony in the middle of Bhuj and constructed a building with a few rooms and an office and a hall. Initially, the Samaj was involved in listening to the Kanbi couple's divorce related problems as well as assisting the familyless elderly people economically. These activities continued for many years. However, as the time passed by, Samaj began helping the poor students with study books.

To develop Samaj's activities Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Yuvak Sangh was established. This was also the beginning of the annual Diwali Function ("Diwali Sanmelan") when the Kanbis from all twenty four villages would gather and celebrate the Diwali Festival every year. Samaj leaders of the time, however, had limited vision of further advancement of the Samaj (because of their own limited education). The mothers of our community were particularly prone to the narrow mindedness, ignorance and blind-faithness due to the lack of education. And therefore it was important to educate our daughters (the would be mothers of our future generation). This remained an ideology for a while due to the lack of appropriate facilities, until 1986.

On the onset of 1986 many volunteers from the Samaj at this time visited all twenty four villages and began preaching the benefits of educating our daughters. However, only twenty eight parents agreed to educate their daughters. The seeds of the Kanya Sanskardham (Girls Boarding School) were first sown

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in 1988 with these twenty eight daughters. To reduce the parent's financial burden, the annual fee was limited to only 500 rupees, which not only covered the tuition, but boarding and lodging as well. First academic year was very successful. Second year even more successful and this increased the confidence within the parents. The parents saw a real improvement in their daughters behaviours when they saw them during the vacations and the number of the girl students increased to 165 in the third academic year.

In 1990 a fourteen-days Silver Jubilee Festival was organised. During this festival members from all other world-wide Samajs witnessed the real progress made by the Kanya Sanskardham. To encourage the girls' education within the community an emphasis was made on the importance of the key role played by the educated mothers in the general development of the community. Realising this importance the generous donors challenged the community leaders to do more for the educational development of our community. A steady flow of the donations began.

During this Festival, it was also decided to establish another school for the further education of the girls so that the girls finishing the primary education does not have to venture out for further education. In 1993 a special thank-you gathering was organised during which all the donors were honoured and Shree Kutchi Leva Patel Kanya Vidya Mandir middle school was opened. Presently, some 1,350 girls are studying in this school.

Sensing the community is ready for the new era yet another progressive concept was introduced during 1993, and this was

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"Samuha Lagna" (A single wedding ceremony for a multiple brides and grooms). The basic reasoning was to save time, and reduce the financial burdens on poor and middle class members of our gnati. This idea was put in practice in month of December of the same year. The idea was so popular that even the financially well-off parents too participate in marrying there children of in the very first Samuha Lagna event. This was a clear reflection of the community's new and educated generation. Today, these events are held twice a year and some 150 brides and grooms have participated in Samuha Lagna programmes. Lately, the Kanbi villages such as Surajpar, Madhapar and Mankuva too are holding Samuha Lagna programmes at the local stage every year. All this was possible due to acceptance of the education by our gnati members.

The education within our gnati continued to spread especially girls' education. Once branded as backward class of the society (because of the lack of education), our people are now progressing hand to hand with rest of the gnatis. In Kutch district our Samaj has obtained a leading position in sports, cultural activities, science fairs, essay competitions, debates and musical competitions. Indeed some of our girls have won competitions not merely up to the state level but at national level as well. We are proud to name some of these winning daughters:

1.	Raghwani, Vanita Laxman	Bal Kabbadi- under 14, Medya Kana Tur
2.	Kerai, Premila Natha	Bal Kabbadi- under 14, Medya Kana Tur
3.	Varsani, Priti Premji	Bal Kabbadi- under 14, Medya Kana Tur
4.	Pindoria, Ranjan Laxman	Shalakiya Khokho-

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5.	Vekaria, Daxa Naran Under 19- Chhatarpur (M.P.)	Shalakiya Khokho-
6.	Hirani, Manjula Premji Under 14, Delhi	Bal Handball
7.	Varsani, Sangeeta Ramesh Under 19- Jammu- Tavi	Shalakiya Khokho-
8.	Hirani, Manjula L. Under 19- Jammu- Tavi	Shalakiya Khokho-
9.	Rabadia, Nita Under 19- Jammu- Tavi	Shalakiya Khokho-

Thus our children have made us proud by succeeding with the top marks at the national level. It was felt that our community would progress even further if the education within the community developed ten years beyond 1998 and this has now been proven.

The leaders of our community through out the world were quite impressed with our girls' educational progress. However, parents began to worry that if the girls continue to progress at the current level soon they will outdo our boys. This would create incompatible married couples. Particularily, boys would not accept a bride who is more edjucated than himself.

To alleviate this concern a three-winged boy's school was opened during the Dasabdi (10th annivasary) Mahotsava (Celebration). The school was built and donated by Shree Laxmanbhai Bhimji Raghwani & Co of Baldia. On the same day opening of one of the largest school hall in Gujarat, known as Shree Matushree Dhanbai Premji Gangjee Community Hall, was performed. This fully furnished hall was donated by Shree Karsanbhai Premji Bhudia of Sukhpar-Roha. Furthermore, a foundation stone for R D Varsani School (donated by Shree Ramji Devji Varsani of

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Samatra) was also laid on the same day.

Initially, the school only had a facility for year eight, but an advance class was added every year to meet the demand. Presently some 850 students are studying in this school. With or without modern facilities our children kept coming to gain education. They are studying with decipline, humbleness and with a view to do something for the Samaj and themselves.

As with our girls, our boys too achieved high success in education, sports, science fair, musical competitions etc. In no time the boys too made their names not only at Kutch district level, but at national level too. Some of our Samaj's pride and joy are:

1. Varsani Amratlal- Gunegar Ne Adkho poster competition- won 2nd prize at the national level.
2. Varsani Manji Naran - Kho kho match- chosen at the national level and played in Madhya Pradesh.
3. Rabadia Dharmendra- Bal kabbadi - chosen at the national level and played in Karnakat.
4. Hirani Vinod Naran- long jump- chosen at the national level and played at Jalpaigudi (West Bengal).

To continue progress of our community our generous gnati brothers decided to build a hospital fully equipped with modern facilities. The opening ceremony of the hospital was performed by then prime minister of Gujarat Shree Keshubhai Patel. The hospital offers medical services to all patients without any discriminations. It has all major facilities for CT scan, Memography, X-ray, Ultra Sonography, Radiology, Pathology, Ventilater, I.C.U., TMT, health check. O.P.D., endoscopic,

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medical store, operation theatre, 24 hours ambulance services etc. Fotdi resident Shree Keshavlal Premji Bhudia's major donation was recognised by naming the hospital after his mother as, Matushree Meghbai Premji Jetha Hospital and Research Centre.

The statistics of the patients treated at this hospital to date is as follow:

1.	CT Scan	3,289
2.	X-ray	5,092
3.	U.C.G.	3,236
4.	Dialysis	1,518
5.	Pathology	12,350
6.	Health Check-up	971
7.	Colour Dopler	110
8.	T.M.T.	516
9.	I.C.O.	711
10.	E.C.G.	1,222
11.	O.P.D.	10,856
12.	Physiotherapy	1,260
13.	I.C.C.U.	1,343
14.	Memography	436
15.	Andoscopy	93
16.	OTD	75

Since then our hospital has established a department for eye diseases, where eye check up and eye operation facilities are performed regularily.

The specialist consultants for gastrology, kidney, joint replacements etc come all the way from Ahemdabad. Soon

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the hospital will have full surgical staff. An anaesthetist and a surgeon has already been appointed.

We are proud to have this hospital as ours, but it requires both moral and financial assistance from us. Only then we can develop the facilities further.

Opportunities are usually disguised as hard work, so most people don't recognise them.

- Ann Landers

Darkeness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

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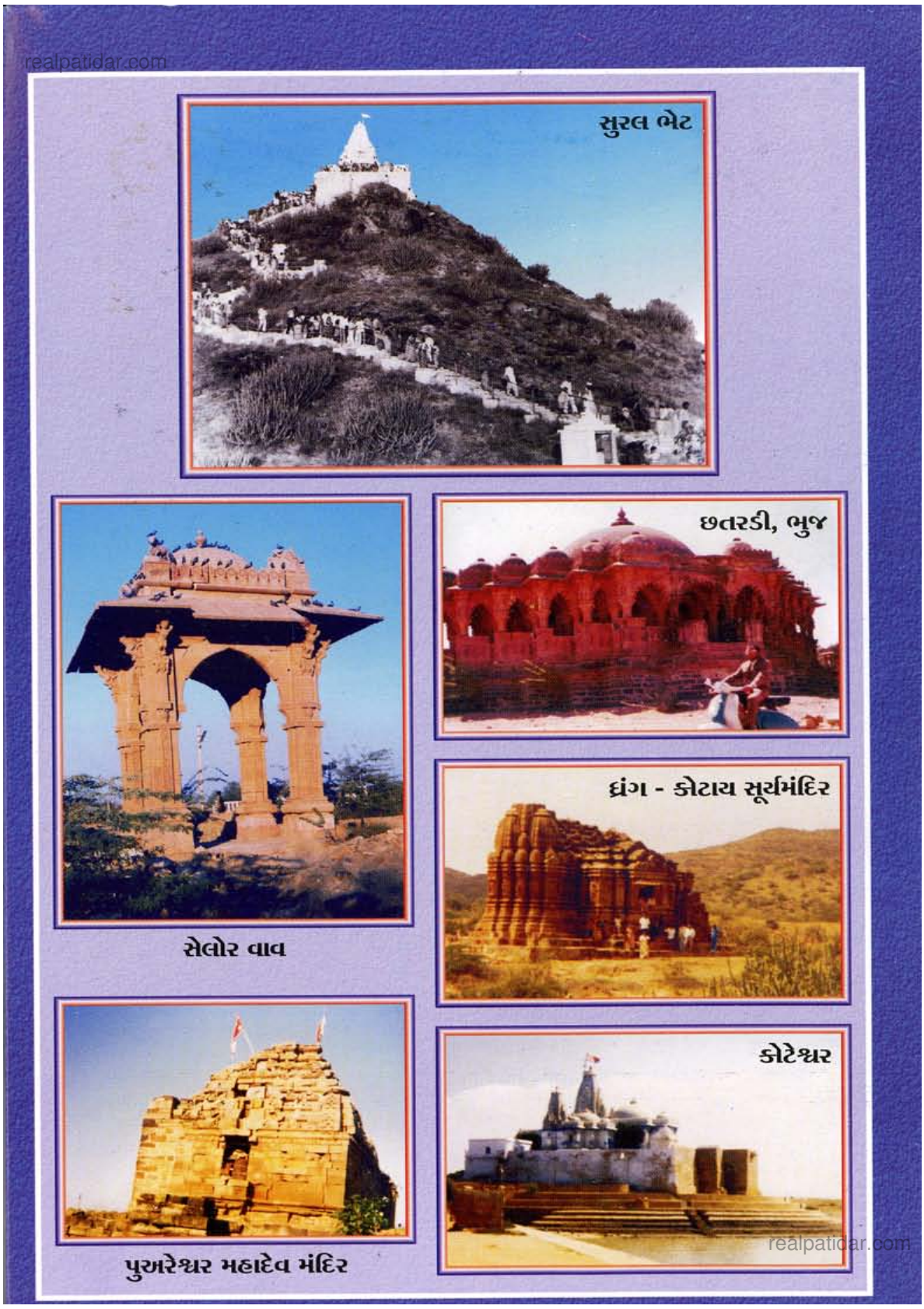

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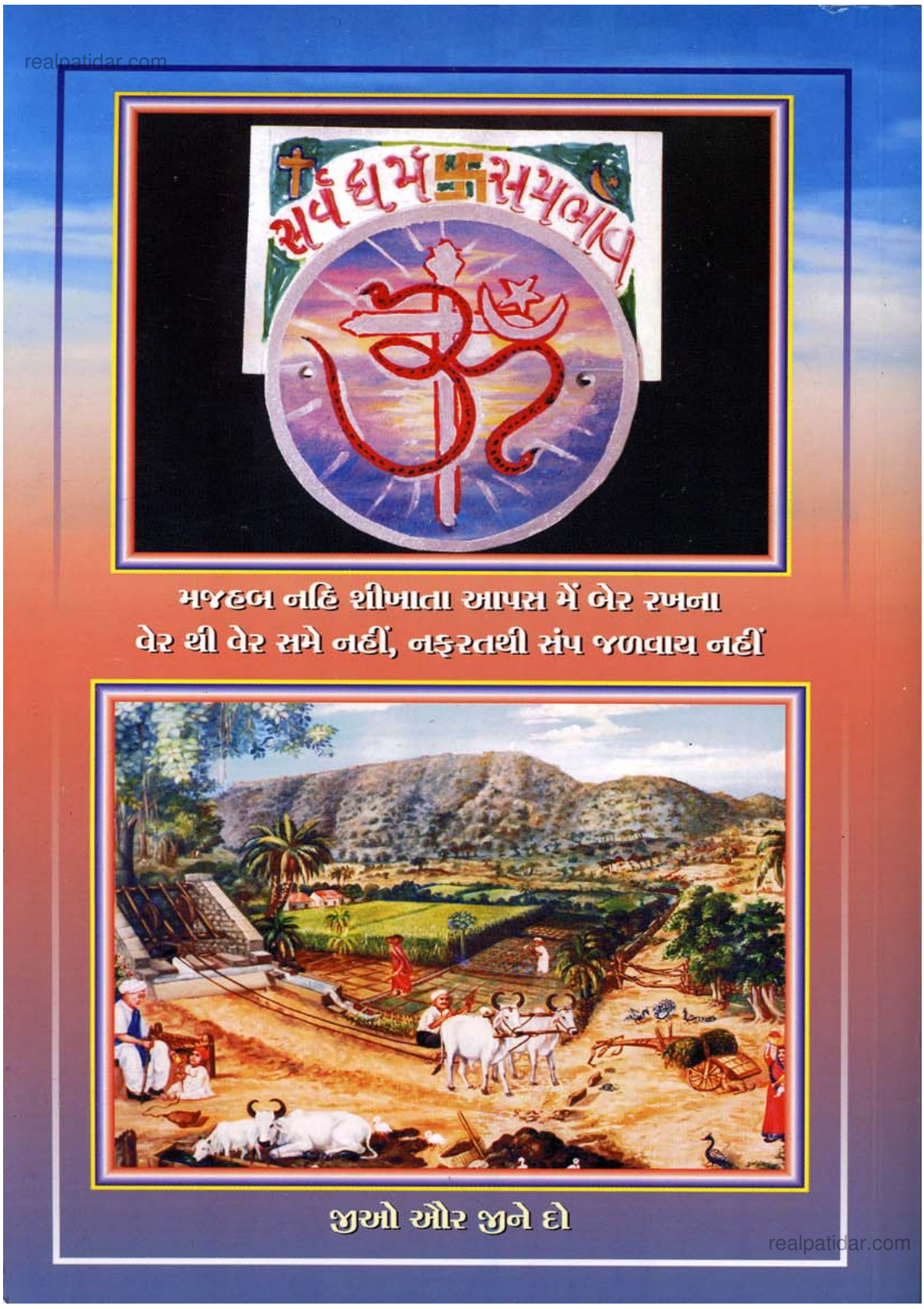

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